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N° 20

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 25 October 2016

Mardi 25 octobre 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 25 October 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 25 octobre 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROMOTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PROMOTION DU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 19, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to amend or repeal various Acts with respect to housing and planning / Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois en ce qui concerne le logement et l'aménagement du territoire.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning. As always, I appreciate the opportunity to speak about important issues that affect my riding, and affordable housing and access to housing affect my riding a great deal.

Today, we are debating Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act. It's always got such a great Liberal title; from my experience, any time the government tries to draw this much attention to the title of the bill, it's usually because there are important details that they would like us to overlook or, as I've discovered, things that have been omitted. Like so many Liberal bills, Bill 7 looks okay on the surface, but many of the details are left to regulation, outside the Legislature's control. Whether Bill 7 turns out to be a good thing or a bad thing will depend on these regulations.

As I've said in this chamber many times before, the devil is always in the details, and with this government, we need to be especially vigilant when it comes to those details. That is the concern with this bill. The government has introduced the legislation but has said, "Don't worry about the rest; we've got it from here." I still wish that we could trust the government to handle it, but sadly their track record is not exactly the best when it comes to putting the interests of Ontarians above their own.

We are concerned by what has been left to regulations. This includes the details on inclusionary zoning, which my colleagues and former members in the NDP have fought so hard for for so many years. For example, there

is no requirement or guideline suggesting that the provision of affordable housing should be permanent. The lack of such guidelines has become a problem in Ontario as multi-decade agreements expire and affordable housing is inevitably put at risk. It's nice to see that the government is finally listening to the NDP's long-standing call for inclusionary zoning, but glazing over details such as this is a dangerous and irresponsible approach.

Rent protection, Speaker, is also missing from this bill. For example, the bill does not end the current system of two-tiered tenant rights, which exempts residences that were first occupied on or after November 1991 from rent increase guidelines. This is not fair. All tenants should have the same rights, regardless of how old their building is, and all tenants should be protected from significant or prohibitive rent increases that could force them out of their homes.

This bill also allows municipalities to give cheques to people in need of housing instead of actual housing to people in need of housing. Speaker, this flexibility can be good for tenants in some contexts, but there are risks associated with it as well. By providing cheques instead of guaranteed housing, there are no assurances that the amount provided will be enough to keep a roof over the recipient's head.

There are also concerns that the money would simply flow into the pockets of landlords through rent increases.

These are serious concerns, Speaker, and they can mean the difference between an increase or a decrease in the availability of affordable housing in our communities. These are not new ideas, they are not new concerns, and they are not the first time the NDP has said them.

Sadly, this is not the first time this Liberal government has overlooked these concerns. They made promises about real rent control prior to the 2003 election and have been breaking this promise for over 13 years. Now they are continuing to break promises with Bill 7. It all comes back to the same concerns. Bill 7 looks okay on the surface, but there are so many details overlooked and so many decisions left to regulations and away from public scrutiny.

The government has also made a number of assumptions with this bill. It seems the government has assumed that with this bill, the market alone can provide affordable housing for Ontarians. It assumes that by clearing away a few regulations and changing some bylaws, the private sector will magically start building lots of affordable housing. It sounds great, and in a perfect world, that would be the case and we could rely on that being the case. But this isn't a perfect world, and this isn't a small

concern. This means rolling the dice on ensuring that families across Ontario can afford a home to live in. That is not something to roll the dice on.

The NDP does want the removal of regulatory barriers to affordable housing, but the market alone will not solve the affordable housing issue. The federal and provincial governments will need to step up with more funding to get affordable housing built.

Unfortunately, Ontarians are still suffering the effects of federal Liberal cuts to housing in the 1990s and provincial downloads by the PCs. This is not just a product of the past or a problem of the past. Provincial funding for housing and homelessness prevention has been cut even further in recent years, including a \$20-million cut to the housing ministry's budget this year.

Speaker, as you can see, there are a number of issues with this bill. We are pleased to see the government finally listening to the call for change, but there are areas where it falls short and there are areas where we simply don't know where it falls, because the government has left so much up to regulation.

The important thing to note here is that these decisions have a real impact on communities across Ontario. By glazing over some of these concerns, the government could be hurting families in need of affordable housing.

This problem is prevalent in so many communities, including my own. The current wait-list for rent-geared-to-income housing in Durham region—so, not just in my riding but in the Durham region—stands at around 5,700 households. That's a lot of people. The housing services division in Durham region does excellent work in our community, but as this government knows, they're simply not provided the support they need to achieve their goals.

In 2014, the region of Durham approved an ambitious 10-year housing and homelessness strategy called *At Home in Durham*. The strategy focuses on four key goals: end homelessness in Durham, secure affordable rent for everyone, provide greater housing choice, and ensure strong and vibrant neighbourhoods. As I said, these are ambitious goals, and I am very proud that our region is fighting them head-on. They have seen some success already. In Durham, 2015 saw a 7% decrease in the usage of emergency shelters from the year before.

But they've also recognized the challenges they face as well. At the time of the study, the average market rent in Durham was \$1,021. Assuming that we follow the rule that no family should have to spend more than 30% of their income on rent, then you would need a minimum income of \$40,000—well, almost \$41,000—to afford that rate. Unfortunately, one in five households in Durham earns less than that amount.

To quote directly from the report, "*At Home in Durham* recognizes that affordable housing is vital to strong and vibrant communities, and commits to working in partnership with the non-profit and private housing sectors to increase affordable housing options for low- and moderate-income households. It also recognizes the need

for increased rental assistance for low-income households who struggle with more severe affordability needs.

0910

"People with low to moderate income face increasing challenges in finding affordable rental housing in Durham. Although the region's social housing portfolio ensures a level of affordability for some of the most vulnerable people in our community—including seniors, people with disabilities and families in crisis—only about 300 subsidized units become available annually. In order to address the affordability needs of all renters in Durham with low to moderate income, the community needs a greater range of affordable rental housing options."

Speaker, you can see that ultimately the region will require real support from the province to ensure that these important goals are achieved. We must remember the problem does not simply end there. As I have discussed during past opportunities to speak in this chamber, affordable housing is about more than rent or a mortgage; it's about the expenses necessary to keep it running, to keep it warm, to keep the lights on and to keep food on the table. People need costs, such as their hydro, to be stable and fair so that they can budget what little they might have to keep up with the cost of living underneath a roof.

In Durham, the average wait time for housing is nearly four years for non-senior singles and couples; seniors wait just over four years. So while we appreciate what the government has put forward on paper with this bill, we need to see action behind it. We need to see the details that will truly decide the effectiveness of this bill and we need to see the resources that will be necessary to make real change happen.

Investments in affordable housing can make a real difference in people's lives and the ripple effects can be massive, so I ask that this government take the time to speak with the experts and community groups that understand the challenges our province faces. Listen to their suggestions. Make real investments in affordable housing in Ontario.

Everyone in Ontario deserves to live with a stable and secure roof over their head and to be able to put food on the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Han Dong: Good morning. I'm very pleased to respond to the comments made by the honourable member from Oshawa. I've been listening to her carefully. I understood that she brought up a few concerns, including inclusionary zoning, rent control and rent protection.

I want to first of all recognize her effort in championing this issue. We all have social housing, affordable housing sectors in our ridings, and this past summer I had the pleasure of visiting a few of them. I heard concerns over how increasingly difficult it is to put a roof above one family, especially in a very competitive market, such as Toronto.

This bill, if passed, would enable or, where prescribed, require municipalities to pass zoning bylaws for inclu-

sionary zoning which must include the number of affordable housing units to be provided; the period of time that an affordable housing unit must be maintained as affordable; requirements and standards that an affordable housing unit must meet; measures and incentives that may be provided to support inclusionary zoning; the price at which the affordable housing unit may be sold; the rent at which they may be leased; and any matter specified in the regulation by the minister.

To me, this bill is making a very comprehensive attempt to make sure that affordable housing is available in our great province. We all know this is very, very important. I look forward to the support from across the floor. Let's get to committee, where we can make real changes in the process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to add my voice to the debate. I appreciate the comments made by the member from Oshawa. I feel it's really important, from our perspective, the PC Party of Ontario's, that when we talk about affordable housing, the first and most important issue that needs to be addressed by this government is affordable energy. That is what's driving the pressure throughout my riding and across Ontario in terms of the inability to pay for ever-rising energy costs.

You're going to hear more about it today, because it's not just about a single parent, it's not just about the senior on fixed income; it's about affordable energy for community living group homes. The list continues to go on and on, and the manner in which this government particularly is ignoring affordable energy is a slap in terms of—it proves them to be disingenuous when we actually stand up in this House and talk about affordable housing, because we have many concerns.

If they actually took time to consult, they would find out that energy is a huge issue when it comes to affordable housing. But, just like in so many other instances, this particular bill was not researched properly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There was a word that you used earlier that I would ask that you withdraw.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Please continue.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: So the manner in which this government is approaching affordable housing leaves a lot to be desired inasmuch as they are turning a blind eye to energy rates. They're turning a blind eye to the importance of doing proper consultation. Again, one of our concerns is the fact that this bill has not been properly vetted, if you will, and consulted on throughout the province. So we want more input to this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to you. It's always a pleasure to stand in my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin. I always enjoy being in the House when the

member from Oshawa brings her views, because she certainly does her homework from her area, that's for sure. She always brings a perspective of what is important to her and her constituency, something I admire and that I try to do myself from a northern perspective.

Some of the points that she did bring across are the affordable options that are lacking in this particular bill and the fact that the regional strategies that were there, that were developed in her area—there was an opportunity here for engagement from the government. The wait time for individuals to get into a home hasn't been addressed and, actually, the lack of details within the content of this bill—again, highlighting a nice title within this bill. However, leaving things to regulation isn't always the message or isn't what individuals are wanting to see—and the fact that individuals across this province are really challenged with the energy crisis that we're in. Those are some of the things she brought forward.

Now, she did also bring forward the idea that the details are going to be within the discussions, and that's something that we are quite worried about. If you bring out a title and you leave the discussions or the details to later on, it really doesn't address the issues that people are looking for and wanting to see within the content of the bill. The fact that there was a huge opportunity here for this government to actually reach out and develop those partnerships and look at the individuals who are there in those regions, who have the skills, who have the knowledge to provide that information and feedback to the government: That's something this government didn't reach out and do. This won't get done unless there are actual funding dollars from both levels of government, federally and provincially, if we're going to have a real strategy developed that will assist all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments. I recognize the Associate Minister of Education.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today—

Interjections.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Oh, I'm sorry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): No, I recognized the Associate Minister of Education. She was up first. So back to the Associate Minister of Education.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act. As you know, we are proposing changes that would, if passed, support improved access to adequate and affordable housing and modernize the social housing system. Mr. Speaker—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, a point of order, please.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. Thank you very much. Just before I recognize the member on a point of order, one of the things I don't appreciate is banging on the table to get my attention. Whoever did it, I would ask that they don't do that again, please.

You are not in your seat, so you are unable to stand on a point of order. However, you are now in your seat, so now I will recognize you on a point of order.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that. I'll communicate your request not to bang on desks to get your attention in the future to all our caucus members.

Speaker, we are on questions and comments for the member for Oshawa's debate on Bill 7. I think the minister is actually doing her debate, as opposed to the questions and comments.

0920

Interjection: How do you even know what she's going to say?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We are on a point—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me, please. Minister, I would ask that you come to order.

We are on two-minute questions and comments. I'm sure that the Associate Minister of Education is aware of that. I stopped the clock on your behalf. Now you are allowed to continue to finish up with your questions and comments. Then we will go back to the member for final comments. Thank you very much. Please continue.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I am aware of the fact that we are in questions and comments now.

I'm pleased to rise and to speak to this. Having a safe and warm place to call home is key to the happiness and success of people. If passed, this bill would try to achieve that by increasing the supply of housing units, by ensuring more stability and security for municipal service managers, by serving social housing tenants, and by allowing social housing tenants to retain more of their income without having to face higher rents. In addition, it will make it easier for municipalities and private developers to provide affordable housing.

The members opposite talked about consultations. Absolutely, there were consultations held as part of this process, extensive consultations, on the long-term and affordable strategy update. That is what fed into this process.

I believe that this really establishes the vision that we have, to ensure that we are achieving that everybody has an affordable and suitable home to provide the foundation for a secure employment and success.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Oshawa for final comments.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate all of the comments from around the room: the members from Trinity-Spadina, Huron-Bruce and Algoma-Manitoulin, and the Associate Minister of Energy. Energy? Education. It must be the morning. Anyway, thank you, everyone.

To the member from Huron-Bruce: Many of the comments that you made were spot-on. This is not just a single-parents' or a seniors' issue. These pressures are being felt across our ridings and across our communities. Without proper consultation, without the homework, as

the member from Algoma-Manitoulin called it, without that sufficient input, why are we bothering? A bill should have the voices and it should have had input from across our province. If we're looking at housing alone and not factoring it into the midst of the energy crisis, and taking in all of our affordability pressures, we're doing a disservice to our communities. The member from Algoma-Manitoulin, of course, had highlighted—and thank you—the regional strategy that Durham region has put forward.

This is a government that should be really working with their partners across our regions and across the province to find out what ideas are out there, to find out what initiatives have already been undertaken, to look at those strategies. Our municipalities and our regions are doing a heck of a lot of good work, and they're doing it oftentimes without that partnership, without that support.

Again, if we're not doing things together and for Ontarians' best, then what are we doing? We shouldn't be making decisions just for the Liberals. We should be making them for those people who need a roof over their heads.

Speaker, I'm glad to have had the opportunity this morning. To the Associate Minister of Education's point: Everyone deserves safe, warm and affordable housing—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 7, Promoting Affordable Housing Act, 2016. I want you to know that I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and also the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

If passed, this bill would improve access to adequate and affordable housing and modernize the social housing system. Having a safe and warm place to call home is key—key to the happiness and success of people. Improving access to affordable housing is part of our government's economic plan to build Ontario up. When people have a home, they are healthier, more ready for employment, and better able to participate in and contribute to their local communities.

We all know how challenging life can be if you don't have a roof over your head, if you're young, if you're old, if you're a senior, if you have a family or if you're a single parent. These are the challenges sometimes that some families face. Families find it hard to pull themselves up and out of difficult circumstances if they can't get back on their feet, and that starts with a home. It starts with a roof over your head and it starts, really, with the Promoting Affordable Housing Act, 2016.

This act is part of a vision. It's part of our vision, and that vision is that every person should have an affordable and suitable home to provide the foundation to secure employment, raise a family and build strong communities. But this isn't just a vision; it is a commitment.

If passed, this bill would increase the supply of affordable housing units through a variety of new tools, including inclusionary zoning. It would ensure more stability and security for municipal service managers as well

as social housing and not-for-profit co-operative housing providers. It would serve social housing tenants more effectively, and it would do this by including housing assistance. It would ensure that families and individuals get that housing assistance in a more equitable and timely fashion, allowing social housing tenants to retain more of their income without having to face higher rents or face eviction, and make it easier for municipalities and their corporations to work with private sector developers.

This is really about ensuring that the people in this province are successful. A home, after all, is more than just a roof. It's a place that creates a safe cocoon, a cocoon around a family that allows families and individuals to grow and sets them on a path to success.

More importantly, this is the right thing to do. There have been many conversations in my riding about this very thing, about affordable housing, about the need for an affordable housing strategy and act, and our government is moving on those voices. We've been listening, and that's what we have here today.

It's an honour and a privilege to speak to this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is certainly an important debate. I appreciate the flavour and the tenor in the House, which is that, I think we all agree, everyone has the right to an affordable and suitable home to provide the foundation they need to live their lives, to secure employment, to raise their families and to build strong communities.

I think that the affordable housing act, Bill 7, is really a very strong response to that absolute need. It reflects the new research and best practices that support Ontario's transformation towards a better housing system. As you know, this bill was introduced earlier in the session. The point of the legislation, without question, is that we want to ensure that the people of Ontario have better access to affordable and adequate housing. I speak as a member—much like my colleague across the way from Algoma-Manitoulin—as a northerner who recognizes how important affordable housing is and how we need to modernize the social housing system.

Bill 7 will introduce legislative amendments to a number of acts: the Planning Act, the Development Charges Act, the Housing Services Act and the Residential Tenancies Act. Most notably, if passed, Bill 7 would help to increase the supply of affordable housing and modernize social housing by enabling municipalities to require the inclusion of affordable housing units in residential developments through inclusionary zoning, which I will speak about a little bit further. It will exempt secondary suites and new homes from development charges—that would be under the Development Charges Act. It would provide local service managers with more flexibility in administering and delivering social housing in their communities as well as—I think this is a pretty important part of the legislation—prevent unnecessary

evictions from social housing, and modernize the enforcement of property standards and rental housing.

The member for Oshawa referenced the need for consultations. We had extremely extensive consultations leading up to the introduction of this legislation. We heard about the need to foster diverse, inclusive communities. To help reach this goal, we have provided a range of planning, financial and other tools through this particular legislation to help municipalities create more affordable housing.

One of the tools we're proposing is called inclusionary zoning. If passed, Bill 7 will allow municipalities the choice of establishing inclusionary zoning policies. Inclusionary zoning would allow municipalities to require private sector developers to include affordable housing units in their residential development proposals. That would not just enable but certainly motivate the private sector to play a much larger role in providing affordable housing.

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We recognize how important this legislation is; it's a real priority of our government. We're very pleased to bring forward this legislation, and certainly hope we get support from all members of the House.

If I may, I will pass on the rest of the time to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act. I think that the issue of affordable housing is important to all of our ridings, to all the people that we represent. Urban realities may differ from rural realities or northern realities but, at the core of that, having the possibility to have housing that is affordable is crucial for many Ontarians.

Just to give some background on this legislation: According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp., 13.4% of Ontarians were in core need of housing in 2011. Nearly 72% of the households in core need were captured solely because they were spending more than 30% of their pre-tax income on housing, so that's how they were captured. Many were waiting for rent-geared-to-income housing, and there had been an increase in that. The average monthly rent for a two-bedroom was not affordable to households in the lowest 50% of the renter income distribution. In other words, many Ontarians, as we said, find it difficult to secure stable and affordable housing.

In order to address these issues, the government brought forward the updated Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy. I think it indicates a vision that is important to everyone: that every person have an affordable, suitable and adequate home to provide the foundation to secure employment, raise a family and build a strong community. This is what we want to ensure.

In the time that I have left, I wanted to address the concern that was raised about the portable housing framework contemplated by this legislation and the fact that it could result in an increase in rent. I wanted to point

out that this legislation, if passed, aims to create more flexibility within our social housing system. That's really important so that Ontarians can have the opportunity to choose the right housing for themselves. The portable housing benefit framework is not an entitlement program and will not be mandated. It just provides an additional tool for service managers in the delivery of targeted housing assistance, and, as such, the impact on rent is expected to be limited.

The Ontario housing allowance working group, a coalition of industry and community organizations, noted in a report that they did in 2008 that existing rent supplement programs in Canada had little impact on rent levels. So the benefit framework would enable more housing choices for tenants, it would move with the person, and I think it would give people the option of being closer to family, social support networks, schools and employment opportunities. That's what's really important to people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise today on behalf of the PC caucus to enter into the debate on Bill 7, a bill that I had an opportunity to speak to previously in this House. I sit beside our PC housing critic.

I've had an opportunity to discuss this legislation with a number of those who represent the Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association. In fact, I spoke to this piece of legislation and then I had a breakfast meeting not too long after that where I spoke to about 40 developers inside the city of Ottawa. One of the major concerns I think that they have is that the government has policies that are spiralling out of control. That doesn't just mean in the development industry; it doesn't just mean inclusionary housing. It relates to taxes, red tape, regulatory burdens, increasing development charges on developers on new homes and rentals and, of course, the hydro rates that have spiralled out of control, that have soared in recent years. I think that makes life more expensive for all Ontarians. I think when the government continues to bring pieces of legislation to this House that make it more complex for affordable housing in the province, that's what we continue to see.

We've said that we would support this legislation depending on amendments. We'll see where that goes as we debate it here today. But the previous version of the affordable housing strategy promised an annual report that included performance indicators that has yet to be released. The only real measure that we've got is that every year there's a wait-list for affordable housing and it hits new record highs every year.

I think the government, if they want to be serious about this, would be far more collaborative with our municipalities but also with the development community, who I think would tell them that the regulatory burden, the high cost of hydro and the high cost of development charges are making it more difficult to attain that affordable housing.

I'd be remiss not to point out that I had a wonderful visit in Greely last week at Albion Woods, where they

are trying to do that attainable housing. That's what this government needs to learn a bit more about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Affordable housing is a serious issue in this province; we all know that. Many people can share stories of constituents who waited far too long to be able to have access to affordable housing. I know in my riding in Brampton, particularly in the Peel region, the waiting lists have been amongst the highest in the province.

Though we are absolutely encouraged by the inclusion of the inclusionary zoning piece, we have to highlight, as New Democrats, that providing laws that allow for inclusionary zoning, that allow for the option to build affordable housing, is not enough in and of itself. It's a great step and we've fought for that for a long time, but there needs to be, hand in hand with this strategy, a government initiative to commit to invest in building affordable housing. That investment is essential. The housing market alone will not allow for affordable housing to be built. There needs to be a concerted effort on the part of the government to invest in that and build that.

Many people talked about the importance of housing. It's essential to be able to have a roof over your head, to have that place where you're safe and secure. It's fundamental. Many of the problems we see in society, whether it's precarious employment, whether we look at the gap between the rich and the poor, the growing income inequality—many of these issues can be addressed if we have access to affordable housing. One of the biggest costs in someone's life is their housing, their rent. If we can find a way to ensure that at least that element, the element of housing, is more affordable, then so many other areas that we need to address and so many other areas that are so important for us to address can be tackled.

That's why we need to, again, highlight how important it is for this government not to only move forward with this legislation but to ensure that we have a concerted effort to build affordable housing in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's a pleasure to speak today on this bill. The bill itself talks about affordability; it talks about affordable housing and making life more affordable to Ontarians. I just kind of scribbled down a list here of 10 initiatives that really are put in place to create more affordability in Ontario. I want to go through the list because I think it's important for people who are watching and people who may read through Hansard to know what the track record of this government is when it comes to affordability.

Average tuition in Ontario for families earning less than \$50,000 is free. We've increased the child benefit to a maximum of \$1,356 per child, implemented by this government; 100,000 new child care spaces created within the next five years. We put in full-day kindergarten, which saves, on average, a family in Ontario \$6,500; and

the Healthy Smiles initiative, which brings 70,000 more young people into a dental care program. We invested over \$900 million in four years to support people who rent by retrofitting social housing apartments and providing grants and rebates. We've put in a vaccine for shingles for seniors. We've put in a minimum wage program that pretty much doubled since we've been in power, and of course the 8% rebate on energy cost here in Ontario that we recently announced.

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Of all those initiatives, the Conservatives have supported one: the 8%. I believe the NDP supported, out of the nine or 10 that I just mentioned, one, which was the 8%. I think it's shameful to be in this House and listen to the NDP and the Conservatives talk about affordability, when all of those initiatives I just listed were voted down by the members of the opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to get up to make a few remarks on the comments that were made. I just want to point out one thing that is different in Liberal language than it is in the real language of the province of Ontario. When the minister says that one of the things that they have accomplished is the 100,000 child care spaces that are going to be created over the next five years, that, my friend, is not an accomplishment; that's what the Premier would call a stretch goal. Because so far, everything they've promised, they don't do.

The thing I really want to talk about for just a moment is some of the challenges in this bill. I support the principle of this bill. I think everyone in this House would support creating more affordable housing for the people of the province. But one of the things that's in the bill is that when developers have inclusionary zoning put on their property, it doesn't allow them to pay cash in lieu of creating the units in that exact development. So if you're building three houses in a row and it's in an area of inclusionary zoning, one of those houses would have to be built as an affordable unit. Somebody would then have to have a system in place to look after that, if it was part of a public housing regime, to make sure that everything was followed up over the next 20 years over these three houses.

I think what they need to do is to make sure, if it's in the best interest of building affordable housing, to take cash in lieu in a development so that it can be moved, in combination with other units in another area, to build in an area where we can manage the affordable housing that's being built, as opposed to being scattered all over the city because they had to have one in each part. So that's one of the things.

The other thing that's rather interesting: If it's in a condominium, how do you deal with the condominium fees for the people who can't afford to pay the price of the condominium fees? That would be part of the affordability, Mr. Speaker.

So I think that there are things that need to be looked at, and I thank you very much for a few moments to talk about them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for final comments.

Hon. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. I also want to thank the members who have made comments.

The member from Nepean–Carleton indicated that we need to work with partners. We need to work, as a government, with our partners, especially with municipalities and other stakeholders. When you work together, you always have a better result. I think our record shows that we have done that in the past and we will continue to make sure that we do that, especially in regard to this bill.

I want to thank the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. He indicated that he's encouraged by inclusionary zoning, and I hope that we will be able to further discuss the bill in committee, where we make most of the significant changes to bills.

Thank you to the Minister of Children and Youth Services and MPP for Don Valley East. He highlighted the importance of affordability and the initiatives that the government has made to make life more affordable for the people of Ontario.

I also thank the member from Oxford. He did say that he supports the bill in principle and he spoke about some of the concerns that he has. Hopefully we will be able to discuss those further, especially in committee.

Mr. Speaker, I think we all agree that when people have a home, they are healthier, they're more ready for employment, and they are better able to contribute and to participate in their community and in our society. That is the goal of this bill. It is to provide people with housing, a roof over their heads, that makes their lives more affordable, but also makes a difference in their lives and makes an overall difference for Ontario as a healthier province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to be in the House again this morning to speak to Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act. In my view, the bill before us today tinkers with affordable housing, but it really doesn't deliver any productive changes that would help to reduce wait times or improve efficiencies. In fact, it makes things worse and some housing even more unaffordable, which is, I take it, counterintuitive to what the actual title of the bill is.

First of all, as I mentioned in my comments last week, the number of people waiting for affordable housing has increased immensely. The wait time in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock alone is well over five years for some types of affordable housing, mostly seniors. The average wait time for seniors across the province has almost doubled on this government's watch from 2.5 years to 4.4 years. In other words, the wait times have doubled after 13 years of Liberal government. They

had 13 years to fix the wait-list backlog, but instead the backlog has doubled and there are now 171,000 families waiting for housing. It's the highest number we've ever seen in this province. I actually think the 171,000 is probably a low number; I think there are far more families waiting for affordable housing in the province. It's mainly due to their increasing hydro bills, but I'll touch upon that point later.

In the previous version—we've had several versions of the government's affordable housing strategy—they promised us annual reports along with performance indicators, but they're nowhere to be found. My colleague from York-Simcoe mentioned that yesterday. There are reports that languish on ministers' desks and they're not looked at. Where's the accountability for that?

The government had also apparently consulted with stakeholders before this bill. Now we find out that these consultations took place after they introduced the legislation. It's a very big trend in the Liberal government. They bring out a bill and then they go to the stakeholders and ask. We saw a lot of those situations occur, bringing in legislation and then, "Let's hurry up and fix it." It may even delay legislation, because they didn't get it right the first time, because they didn't have the consultations. We're seeing that with a few bills in front of us, asking for longer time before they do clause-by-clause, which means they tidy up the bill for the amendments they should have had. So it's a trend that this government has of disrespecting stakeholders such as, in this case, our municipalities and plowing forward with the changes that it wants, that the government wants to make, rather than listening to Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken many times that my riding is largely rural, has a number of municipalities, and they'll be negatively affected by many of the changes proposed in Bill 7. For example, many municipalities do not have a municipal property standards bylaw, which means they'll be facing additional costs as a result of this bill. That doesn't make municipalities happy, that they weren't consulted and now they're going to pay more for this bill. Instead of working collaboratively with municipalities on what can be done that isn't so costly to them, this government didn't ask municipalities.

Another example: This bill downloads the cost of inspecting and enforcing maintenance standards under the Residential Tenancies Act to municipalities, where it was previously the responsibility of the minister. So you have our cash-strapped municipalities asked to take on even more responsibilities while this government washes its hands of it. They even included a clause which allows the government to make inclusionary zoning mandatory for prescribed municipalities despite their claims that they won't force it on anyone.

The member from Oxford has followed this bill along, and he has made good comments. He just finished speaking about some amendments he'd like to see. But, again, if they had spoken with municipalities and the member from Oxford before they brought this legislation in—I

mean, he is the critic for municipal affairs and housing—maybe they would have corrected this and it wouldn't be so upsetting to municipalities.

The bill also requires that municipalities conduct the enumeration of homeless people. I again express my appreciation to those doing the enumeration work in Kawartha Lakes-Haliburton. They share the social services delivery model between those two large municipalities, which is close to 100,000 people put together. I know they worked hard throughout the summer on that. They had many open houses and public consultations.

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But we know that when the federal government recently enumerated homeless people in a number of designated municipalities, it actually provided a million dollars of funding per municipality. Here in Ontario, the Wynne government has only announced \$2.5 million for the entire province. You can add to that the unnecessary red tape and regulations that ignore common sense solutions that would lower affordable housing costs: for example, the requirement under the Housing Services Act for housing providers to purchase natural gas and insurance through the Housing Services Corp.

The member from Oxford did a fantastic job of highlighting the wasteful crown organization charges that inflated the rates for natural gas, which gouge housing providers. A couple of examples I'm going to throw in here: If they didn't have to purchase through the HSC, the Housing Services Corp., which it is mandated to, the city of Toronto would have saved \$6.3 million on natural gas in a single year. In the city of Hamilton, an additional \$1.1 million was spent on natural gas in one year, and in Peel region, an additional \$182,000 in one year.

There are a ton of examples where the government is forcing municipalities to purchase through HSC and it's actually costing them more on the affordable housing front. The member from Oxford did a great job of highlighting this. The government still hasn't taken action to free municipalities up from purchasing the products from the Housing Services Corp.

The government should be tidying these details up before they try to bring in a bill that says "affordable housing" but really tinkers around the edges of providing affordable housing. The government should have done that. It would embrace a reasonable market solution and it would have reduced the cost for municipalities, as I've said. But "wasteful status quo" is this government's mantra, so the wasteful status quo it is. Instead of fixing the problem, which the member from Oxford highlighted and which municipalities would have welcomed, they choose to do nothing.

The bigger problem, I think, with this government's approach on the issue is they seem to be oblivious that all their other policy decisions have contributed to the issues that have been plaguing affordable housing in Ontario. Of course, we have the government's unwanted and inefficient experimentation with wind turbines and its decision to cancel the infamous gas plants, both of which have had to be absorbed by all Ontarians. We're talking

billions and billions of dollars that all Ontarians are paying for, which has actually made life more unaffordable in the province of Ontario.

Nothing has contributed more to the increasing unaffordability of housing than the skyrocketing costs of hydro for individuals. It has been the tipping point of more and more people in poverty in this province than anything else that I have ever seen. There's no way they can actually afford housing. They can't afford to pay their hydro bills, Mr. Speaker. We see this across the province. The government is kind of starting to listen to the fact that the hydro rates are impoverishing people at record rates, but they're really just giving you 8% off your hydro rate and they think that is to be celebrated: "Well, they increased the bills by over 400%, but we'll give you 8% and all's good."

Well, it isn't good, Mr. Speaker, because the cost of hydro is still going to increase. They're selling Hydro One. That's going to increase the cost of hydro. We've heard from many, many professionals in the business that that's going to increase the cost of hydro.

But you really don't have to go any further in your communities than to phone the food banks. How are things? It's up pretty much 30% everywhere, the use of food banks. Why is it up? Because they can't afford to pay their hydro bills and they can't afford to eat. I have Fuel for Warmth, which is basically a fuel bank instead of a food bank, in my riding, in Haliburton, created by many churches who just want to help people. They see an unprecedented demand for assistance.

I see people in parades. I'm in parades, and the working moms actually pull me over and say, "Please, help me with my hydro bill. I can't pay my bills and feed my children, and I'm the one out there working."

Mr. Speaker, that is a huge telltale sign of what's going on in the province of Ontario, and the affordable housing act is really just a housekeeping measure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to offer my comments to the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock on her thoughtful talk this morning on Bill 7, Promoting Affordable Housing Act.

It's interesting, her last comment there, that this is essentially a housekeeping initiative. Wouldn't it be wonderful if this government would actually focus on keeping housing at the forefront for Ontarians?

I appreciate many of the comments that she made, especially when we were talking about regional solutions. I had spoken about this in my remarks, that my region has put forward initiatives and a 10-year plan. Wouldn't it be remarkable if the government of the day actually had a long-range plan? Imagine where we could be if we had a long-range housing plan instead of piecemeal, stopgap measures. But there we have it: We don't.

I appreciate the term "wasteful status quo" as well. That is what we keep seeing over and over. We have so many opportunities to be that much further ahead, but we just kind of accept some of where we are and we throw

good money after bad, and we see wasteful spending and initiatives from this government.

The issues that are plaguing affordability are many and varied. We talk at length and, I would say, ad nauseam about Hydro One, because we have to, because that is the number one issue we are hearing. It's not just at the forefront of people's minds; they're trying to feed their children. Money does not grow on trees. It does not come out of thin air. But it is coming out of children's education funds. It is coming out from under mattresses. People are making these tough choices.

To hear about food banks and skyrocketing costs—we need affordable housing and we need it now. We don't just need a housekeeping bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Han Dong: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and her debate on this bill, government Bill 7.

She talked about the consultation process, so I'm pleased to inform the House that in developing the updated Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, the ministry held consultations with partner ministries and major housing, health and human services stakeholders. In addition, the ministry attended 38 stakeholder meetings and consultations to discuss the LTAHS update. In total, 113 formal written submissions from stakeholders and the general public were received.

In addition, the ministry conducted further consultations via registry and stakeholder sessions between March and April with a variety of stakeholders on the proposed legislative amendments in Bill 7.

I also would like to point out that should this bill pass second reading, it will be going to the committee, and then we will have even more public input opportunities.

She also talked about support for municipalities. Since 2003, this government, on this side, has been providing lots of support to municipalities and, in fact, uploading lots of services. Some of those services were downloaded by the Conservative government prior to us. So I just want to point that out and remind the members of this House that we've been doing real work on this side to support municipalities, and also tackling homelessness.

I think this bill provides many, many meaningful instruments to municipalities and gives them the tools to create an affordable housing environment in our great province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to respond to the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I know I only have a couple of minutes of questions and comments, but I think she hit the nail on the head.

I appreciate the fact that the member for Trinity-Spadina just used his government talking points. I know the government likes to talk about what happened 20 years ago, but the member, Ms. Scott—I think she hit the nail on the head.

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When we have 171,000 people on a waiting list, a waiting list that has grown significantly since 2003, we're going in the wrong direction. I would much rather have this government come forward with a collaborative approach, rather than just the same old same old. "We're going to get money from the federal government. We're going to match it. We're going to dump it over to municipalities. We're not going to necessarily consult them. If they use the units, great. If they don't, they don't."

I think we have to do better. Rather than having a piece of legislation like this, I think we need to have something—and I mentioned this to our critic this morning—like a select committee, where we have all the stakeholders with us, we have all three parties and we sit down and look at very concrete ways to grow the housing stock, to get that waiting list down.

The member, in her speech this morning, talked about the issue with municipalities. Many of them don't have property standards bylaws. Many of them don't have the financial resources to hire additional staff to deal with the rules and the procedures in this bill. This is something that I think this government has to get its head around. Rather than talking about what happened 20 years ago, let's talk about what's happened over the last 12 or 13 years. We've got a serious crisis in this province and we need to work together. We can't continue to play partisan politics.

Personally, I think the select committee is the only way to do this. I would hope that some of the government members would listen to Mr. Hardeman's recommendations when it comes to committee. I think we'd be a lot better off.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for her contribution to the very important bill on affordable housing.

She touched on hydro rates. I ask that this government really, really consider what they're doing to hydro rates, because affordable housing—what we're talking about today—is extremely important, but when you have affordable housing and people can't pay their hydro rates, then that is a problem. The money they have, the income they derive, is going to be spent on trying to stay in their homes with a hydro bill that's exorbitant, and other things are going to suffer.

I have to tell you, seniors are one of the concerns I have for affordable housing. All my seniors in the London-Fanshawe area say that they want to stay in the area, they want to stay close to their supports, to their families, to the local businesses they've developed a relationship with and to their MPP so they can have access to that office. There isn't a lot of affordable housing in the London-Fanshawe area. It's just a known fact.

When we talk about seniors, they are the ones who are being hit extremely hard because they're on fixed incomes. Having hydro rates that are unaffordable means they're going to cut other things. This is really a reality

of what they're facing. They are going to cut their drugs. They're not going to be able to afford things like hearing aids. They compromise on their food bill. This is another thing that this government needs to address.

This bill is weak in areas. A lot of it is left to regulation. A lot of it is dependent on developers to meet the needs of affordable housing. I think this bill can be strengthened so that it actually makes a difference and gives people affordable housing in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for her reply.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I want to thank the members from Oshawa, Leeds-Grenville, Trinity-Spadina and London-Fanshawe for their comments. They certainly have told the stories in their ridings of people who are on wait-lists for affordable housing that never end.

I know the member from Oshawa and I share the Durham region. What she mentioned about regionally working together, I think Durham region does what they can to work together to address these problems. The government members have said that they're giving municipalities tools to deal with this when we're actually uncovering the fact that municipalities are going to have more costs. These are more rules and more downloading to the municipalities to deliver this.

The member from Leeds-Grenville articulated that very well. Where was the consultation with municipalities before they brought the bill in? The municipalities are creatures of the province. We need to work collaboratively with them so that they do have the right tools. Everybody wants to have more affordable housing.

The big thing we see here, besides the wasteful status quo by this government, is the fact that—I'd like a bill that says "affordable hydro act," so that we can actually deal with the fact that we've got these skyrocketing hydro rates that are putting more people in poverty. More people are going to be on the affordable housing list. We've seen that double under this government's watch. You're going to see more and more of that because people have used their savings. I have seniors who don't even go and get prescriptions filled, or they don't go and get that assistive device. They just can't afford that extra cost because they have to pay their hydro bill.

I've spoken in this Legislature about load limiters. Are we in a third-world country? The fact is that I have many people on load limiters so they're restricted on the amount of hydro they can use in a day. I'm sorry if they're going to have to freeze at nighttime, but this government doesn't care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I am honoured to join in the debate on Bill 7. Many people have talked about this, and I'll just highlight it again: It's absolutely important for us to build more affordable housing in this province. The interesting thing about affordable housing is the intersection between affordable housing and many other areas

that are important for us to tackle, and I want to draw the connection.

If we look at affordability, more and more people are finding it difficult—life is more difficult, and in terms of affordability with respect to bills and costs, it becomes harder and harder for people to make ends meet. It's difficult right now. One of the biggest costs in most people's lives is their housing costs, the rent, their mortgage or their purchase of a place to live. Affordability, in general, is linked with affordable housing, but there are also other factors.

If you look at the social determinants of health, having a healthy, clean and safe place to live has a direct and strong impact on your health. So having a clear investment by the government into social housing, into good, clean, safe housing, will actually also impact the health of the community.

If we want our society to look forward to a better future for the next generation, if we want to ensure that families are able to provide opportunities for the next generation, if we want the next generation to succeed, again, affordable housing is directly linked to that. To have a home as your home base to be able to grow and succeed in life is also very important. There are so many factors. Affordable housing impacts families, impacts this province and impacts the people of this province in many ways, and since it's so important, we need to put a lot of emphasis on how we tackle this problem.

Now, the bill includes a number of areas that are important, and we support that—for example, inclusionary zoning. But there are a lot of ways this bill could go a lot further, and there are a lot of components of this bill which are unclear or they leave much to regulation. They don't allow this Legislative Assembly to debate the nuances of the bill or the specifics of the bill because so much is left to regulation, and I want to touch on a number of areas.

If we want to really look at affordability when it comes to housing, one key aspect of affordability is rent, and nowhere in this bill does it address rent control. Rent control is something we see the impact of. If you have rent control, rent is affordable. We have examples. We have other provinces, other jurisdictions where there is rent control and where it's far more affordable to be able to rent a unit, rent an apartment. The Liberals have actually promised to include rent control, to bring back rent control that was taken away by the Conservative government. The Liberals promised to do that, and that was a great promise. That's an important thing to address because we need rent control. However, for the past 13 years—13 years, Mr. Speaker—this government has broken that promise. They promised it. Mr. McGuinty, when he was Premier, made it very clear, but that promise was broken year after year after year. I'd like to know, actually—and hopefully in the response—does this government still believe in rent control? Do they still have a commitment to this promise they made before, or have they abandoned it? Because if they've abandoned it, then we can say that they've made a promise and now

they've abandoned it and it's no longer a commitment they have. But we're left with this assumption that the government said, "We're going to do it." They haven't done it. This bill was a great opportunity to address rent control, but, again, they've broken that promise and they've not committed to bringing that back.

1010

If you look at housing in this province and look at it from the bigger picture, there was a massive download of responsibilities onto municipalities by the Conservative government in 1999. Part of that was to download housing onto municipalities. We all know that downloading the various services that have been downloaded onto municipalities was a bad decision. Why? Because municipalities have limited means. They only have essentially one main resource or one source of revenue, which is property tax. Besides that, they have no other source of revenue. To put all these essential, important services on a level of government that has limited resources really doesn't make a lot of sense.

This government acknowledges that, acknowledges that that wasn't a good idea. In fact, a government report in 2010, the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, made it clear that the downloading of social housing onto municipalities was short-sighted by the Harris government. That was a short-sighted decision. So if the government acknowledges that it was a short-sighted decision, you would assume that the government would then say, "Okay, we need to now upload that responsibility." But, Mr. Speaker, as you know and I know, they have not done that. They've not uploaded that responsibility. They continue to maintain the status quo, which is to have a level of government with limited resources continue to be responsible for such an important matter as social housing.

In fact, if we look at this government's track record when it comes to housing, they continually cut when it comes to important elements of housing. In 2012, when the government eliminated the community start-up and maintenance fund, they rolled it over to a new fund but they provided less funding than before to address homelessness and to address issues of housing. Then in 2013, the Wynne government cancelled the Toronto Pooling Compensation. So they've reduced funding to essential things like housing. This is a fact. This is what this government has done. It's not surprising, but these are the realities.

Given that we have a limited pool of affordable housing units—it's a reality; there is a limited pool—the government needs to commit to building more. They need to actually commit to the dollars, the funding, to make sure we build more housing units in general so that people can afford housing. But in the meantime, we have another reality: Many people resort to basement apartments. They resort to second units in homes as an option for affordable housing. The government has taken some steps—and I give the government some credit on this—in moving toward making it easier to have second units in homes.

The NDP, when we were in power, made sure that that second unit policy was a right so that people could immediately be able to have a second unit in their homes. That is so important. Particularly when we have limited options for housing, we need it to be very clear that in the current climate, with the current serious crisis with respect to affordable housing, we need to ensure that, at a minimum, people have a right to build a second unit and that people have access to that as a potential for affordable housing. When second units are registered, when they are regulated, they're safer, there are better conditions and they can ensure that there is at least that option for people when it comes to affordable housing.

Just to touch on some of the strategies that we can employ, inclusionary zoning, which would allow for affordable housing to be factored in to a developer's plan, is a good start, but we need to set some clear guidelines with respect to those units. We need to also look toward supporting not-for-profit co-operative housing as an option for affordable housing and we need to set some real targets. This government has not set any clear targets about how many housing units this government is prepared to build or when they're going to build them by. We need to know very clearly; this province needs to have a direction with respect to when they can expect to see more housing units built.

In terms of the direction this government needs to go, instead of continuing to break this promise, the government needs to implement rent control and implement it immediately, so that we can move towards more affordable housing with respect to rental units.

This government needs to take this opportunity to break from the past and actually commit to uploading the responsibilities of social housing back on to the province. The province has income tax revenue, the province has sales tax revenue, the province has more resources and more revenue, and it should be the responsibility of the province to commit to building and dealing with social housing. This is something the government can do.

In general, we need a significant shift, not an incremental step. We need a significant step to ensure that housing is affordable and we need to do that immediately. It's not the time to take incremental or minor steps. We need a bold vision and a bold step towards creating affordable housing in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 10:15, this House is now in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I would like to introduce Diane Brekelmans, Colleen McKay, Pete Overdevest and Megan Veldman. They're here from the 16th class of the

Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program. I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome Cliff Lawton back to Queen's Park. As you know, he's the father of our page Elisabeth Lawton. Welcome back, sir.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to introduce Martina Pfister from the 16th class of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, and Mike Colizzi and Megan Harris-Pero from LEAD New York. Welcome.

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's my privilege today to introduce two constituents of mine, Don and Jim Chapman, who run Lakeview Vegetable Processing in the riding of York-Simcoe. Please help me welcome my guests here today.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's my honour to recognize and welcome, in the public west gallery today, the Advanced Agricultural Leadership class, including leaders in agriculture and agri-food from across Ontario and from the wonderful area of New York state. I hope that they have a great day here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'd also like to introduce to the members Mike Pastir, Jennifer Peart and Ann Vermeersch, also from the 16th class of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I would like to introduce Nikki Jackson and Marijke Van Andel from the 16th class of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, and also Laura Bentley and Ted Greenwood from LEAD New York.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I like to introduce Robin Brown from the 16th class of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program. She is here from the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, of course.

I'd also like to introduce, from New York, Challey Comer, Jean O'Toole and Martha Facer.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm pleased to welcome my next-door neighbour. Kevin Goldberg is here, a newly graduated engineer. He works for the company MetaFLO Technologies. They're here for the special day for ONEIA. Welcome, Kevin. Glad to see you.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: On behalf of the member from Niagara Falls, I would like to introduce Dylan Wiens and Marty Byl from the 16th class of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, and Sam Filler from LEAD New York.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The Ontario Environment Industry Association is well represented here today. In committee room 228 between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m., they have a reception, and I hope that you'll come out.

I'd like to introduce Greg Jones, Alex Gill and Irene Hassas. This is the team that's helping us implement Bill 151, which they co-authored with this Legislature.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce, from my riding, the heart of agriculture in this province, Tom Heeman, Kevin Howe and Jon Lamb from the 16th class of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to welcome, of course, our guests from the Ontario Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program visiting Queen's Park today.

Here today from my riding is my very good friend Anna DeMarchi-Meyers. Welcome, Anna, to Queen's Park.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today members from AMPCO from the riding of Huron-Bruce: Cameron Moffat, joined by Andy Mahut and Sue Olynyk.

I'm also very pleased, as an alumna of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, class 6, to welcome our AALPers to Queen's Park. In particular, from my riding of Huron-Bruce, we have Rebecca Miller and Emily Morrison. They are joined in this class by Stuart Adams from Quebec and Jenn Norrie from Alberta.

On behalf of Speaker Levac, the member from Brant, I'd like to welcome Jenn Kyle, and on behalf of the member from Durham, Adrienne Houle. Welcome to Queen's Park, everyone.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to welcome to Queen's Park, in the members' gallery this morning, for the page captain today, Paige MacCarthy: her mother Josi MacCarthy, her grandparents Ann and Dane MacCarthy, and her aunt Erin MacCarthy. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: On behalf of the member from Wellington-Halton Hills I'd like to introduce Meghan Burke and Anna DeMarchi-Meyers, from the 16th class of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, and Thomas Matthews, who is from the LEAD New York delegation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery today, we have with us, visiting from the riding of Brantford and Brant, Sandra Kagoma and her daughter, Eema Kagoma. Eema is a celebrated singer and won the Royal Conservatory Gold Medal for singing in Ontario. We welcome our guests today. Thank you for being here.

As well in the Speaker's gallery today, a delegate and a good friend of mine, Mr. Talmadge Branch, the House majority whip in the Maryland House of Delegates. Welcome. We're glad you're here with us, Talmadge.

Seeing no further introductions, it is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The Liberals can't seem to get anything right when it comes to the energy file. The waste never seems to end. Some \$12 million wasted on consultants and advertisements; \$28 million losing a lawsuit for a project that hasn't even been built. And the newest scandal? An \$81-million accounting error by the Independent Electricity System Operator, or the IESO. Just like that, the IESO's deficit grew by \$81 million.

Are the Ontario ratepayers on the hook for an \$81-million Liberal accounting error yet again? How does this keep on happening, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite should know that there are no additional impacts to ratepayers. I believe this is an issue that goes back to 2010. The \$70 million in savings from our recent Quebec agreement remains a net savings to Ontario ratepayers. As I say, the issue that the member is referencing is something that goes back to 2010. There are no additional impacts on ratepayers from that issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not quite the answer I got from the deputy minister this morning, but so much for being transparent.

The Liberals have tried to hide this \$81-million mistake. The public accounts say that they have applied to the Ontario Energy Board to raise rates to correct this Liberal accounting error. I hardly think that it's ethical for the Liberals to hike hydro bills to make up for their mistakes.

Speaker, has the \$81 million in hydro rate increase been approved by the OEB? How much more can a family expect to pay to make up for this Liberal accounting error?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I thank the honourable member for his question. As we said in committee, we need to be very clear from the outset that there are no new additional impacts on ratepayers.

Accounting experts determined over which periods these payments would need to be recovered. This was done in 2010. All government agencies use these standards. They changed from GAAP to PSAB.

Last week in the House, we passed legislation to save five million Ontarians 8% on their electricity bill. This week, the opposition is talking about accounting practices for pension payments dating back from 2010 that have previously been disclosed through several years' worth of public accounts.

In the speech from the throne, we announced regulations to save businesses up to one third of their energy costs. This week, the opposition is talking about accounting practices and disclosures from years ago. We'll continue to stay focused on the issues while they just shake their fists at things.

Interruption.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. In the middle of the hustle and bustle I also heard some implements going off. I'm going to remind all members: Do not leave your BlackBerrys or your instruments on the top of your desks. As they go off, they still get picked up by the AV stuff. It is also harmful to those who have got the earphones on who are trying to hear this. Please, let's all keep our implements away.

Final supplementary: The member from—

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Speaker. This is another \$81-million Liberal scandal that this government is trying to sweep under the carpet here this morning.

Back to the Premier. In just the past two weeks it has been revealed that this government wasted \$12 million on consultants and advertisements, another \$28 million in the Windstream lawsuit, and lost another \$81 million through an accounting error. I'll trust the Auditor General's accounting before I trust this Liberal government's accounting any day of the week. This means that the Liberals wasted, with all the three scandals over the last week, another \$121 million with the stroke of a pen.

We know that this is a former federal NDPer, but congratulations: With these scandals, you've now officially become a Liberal cabinet minister in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, how much will families be expected to pay to make up for this latest \$121 million worth of Liberal scandal, waste and mismanagement?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I know that the honourable member likes to focus on my past, but this government focuses on Ontarians' futures.

For those of us on this side of the House, we know that back in 2010 there were accounting practices that have changed in accordance with expert guidelines. All government practices have changed in relation to that. They went from GAAP to the PSAB.

What we've done on this side of the House is make sure that we continue to focus on a clean, reliable system. When we're talking about the details of this accounting change, the opposition obviously has no plan when it comes to energy. They can't see the forest for the trees. The only thing that they can see are the big coal piles that they would like to bring back into Ontario and start firing up these coal plants with. We have now invested in a clean—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings will withdraw.

Mr. Todd Smith: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not amused. Wrap up, please.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Just on Friday, we announced an agreement that will take \$70 million of costs out of our system that we've actually worked with Quebec over three years in establishing. That will help all families in this province. We're very proud of that agreement.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Premier. Repeating a myth doesn't make it accurate. The first coal-fired plant that was closed in Ontario was closed by the Ontario PC Party.

Businesses across Dufferin-Caledon are sharing the effects of skyrocketing hydro bills and what it's doing to their businesses. One business owner told me, "If the government hopes to retain what little manufacturing remains in Ontario they should be very concerned with this issue.... Soaring hydro rates have an impact on our ability to spend on capital expenditures and increase wages." I agree. This government has destroyed our province's once proud manufacturing sector because of

skyrocketing energy rates, and it is deterring new businesses from creating jobs in Ontario.

Will the Premier finally come up with a real plan to make energy affordable for Ontario businesses?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise and answer the question, especially when it comes to the success stories that we have on this side of the House that the government has invested in helping small businesses right across the province.

The ICI program is something we should all be proud of. Over 300 businesses currently participate in that. It's 800 megawatts of savings that save all businesses and all families money.

I talked about a few examples last week. Let me bring up another one. The Chesswood Arena in North York received about \$56,000 in incentives from the Save on Energy program to upgrade their ice rink control system and lighting. The retrofit not only delivered annual savings of \$70,000 but it also improved ice and skating conditions at the rink. I know that these programs help conserve energy while saving businesses money.

We also have many more examples: six auto part manufacturers in Guelph; two food-processing plants in Brampton; 10 assorted manufacturing plants in York region; a textile plant in Woodstock. All of these places are benefiting from the programs that we have in place to help small businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Simcoe-Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the Premier. Not long ago, I received a letter from Mr. Brian Torrie of Stayner, who wrote to me to say that Ontario's electricity rates are scandalous. Mr. Torrie is a senior on a fixed income and says that his hydro bill has increased by 35% in the last two years. Like thousands of others, Mr. Torrie finds Ontario's skyrocketing electricity rates completely unacceptable.

Mr. Torrie wrote that he would like the Premier to visit him and explain why her government has created such a mess with Ontario's electricity system. Will the Premier agree to visit Mr. Torrie and offer him an explanation?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I thank the honourable member for his question. The important thing for this government to do is to continue to move forward with our programs and our plan on energy and how we can save families and save seniors some money on their electricity bill. We've done that, Mr. Speaker. Just last week, we passed the bill that relates to the 8% reduction for helping families and helping individuals and seniors like Mr. Torrie. I think it's important that the opposition let him know that this is going to happen on January 1, 2017.

Interjection: Good news.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It is good news. We also have the OESP program. I'm not sure of all the details that relate to Mr. Torrie's case, but if he does heat his home with electricity, then he can qualify, with the OESP program, for up to \$75 a month.

I'm more than happy to ensure that Mr. Torrie and all seniors and all families right across this province are aware of the great programs that we have in place to help families and to help seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary? The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is also to the Premier. In addition to soaring costs and unreliable power, the government's energy system has a new way to make it harder for businesses. Louise Severson of Severson Cleaners in Brockville is one of many business owners contacting me about Hydro One's deposit charges. After decades of being an outstanding customer, Louise had a slightly late payment. She was immediately hit with a \$1,300 deposit charge. I think that's outrageous, but it gets worse: A letter and a personal call from her bank couldn't void the charge. She had to spend \$100 on a credit check.

The Premier can claim that this isn't her fault, but the buck stops with her. She's in charge. Does she agree that this is wrong, and will she join me in demanding that Hydro One stop gouging businesses with these charges?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I do want to thank the member for bringing forward that question and talking about businesses within his riding, because we do have programs to support businesses right across the province, from southern Ontario to northern Ontario to eastern Ontario to central Ontario. We have great programs in place that help businesses with their electricity costs, if they're having a difficult time.

When you look at many of the programs that we offer to help small businesses, I hope that this member is talking to this individual about the saveONenergy program that Hydro One would be able to offer this business, because they are offering these programs to businesses right across the province.

I can talk about many programs. In Thunder Bay, the Canada Malting Co. invested in the saveONenergy program, got about \$2 million back in a \$7-million cost and they're saving \$1 million a year on their energy costs, creating more jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is for the Premier. When the Liberal government cancelled gas plant contracts for purely political reasons, it cost taxpayers over \$1 billion. Does the Premier know how much it will cost the people of Ontario to cancel the \$5.5-billion signed contract with Windstream?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: When it relates to Windstream, we are well aware that the tribunal has provided us with 20 days to work with our counterparts in the federal government to do our due diligence and take a look at all aspects of this to make sure that we get this right.

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But when it comes to our investments in this province and our investments in the electricity system, we've actually brought forward 18,000 megawatts of renewable energy. That's something we should all be proud of. When you look at coal, the next best thing in reducing our GHGs is the 18,000 megawatts of renewable energy that we've brought online.

When it comes to natural gas firing, I think that it's important for us to talk about the Quebec deal. That's something we should all be very proud of because the two terawatts of power that we are bringing in from Quebec will be directly targeted toward the natural gas peaking plants, which will reduce our GHGs even further.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, it's clear they don't like this question.

Signing the Windstream contract has already cost taxpayers \$25 million plus \$3 million in legal fees because a NAFTA tribunal says the contract is still in force and the province has put it on hold. If the government was committed to producing public power instead of signing lucrative contracts with private energy companies, Ontario's energy system would be free to serve the public interest instead of being tied up in courtrooms and NAFTA tribunals. When Liberals and Conservatives sign private energy contracts, it means putting the interests of big corporations ahead of the needs of the people of Ontario.

How much more are Ontarians going to have to pay because the Liberals signed a \$5.5-billion contract with Windstream? How much more?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Of course, I'm happy once again to answer this question.

As I've said before, we have 20 days to review this case. The question that the member brought forward is purely speculative. It's full of speculation. What I can talk about are facts. Fact: We've invested in renewable energy. Fact: We've invested in nuclear energy, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs and providing baseload power for the province.

We're very proud of the system we have in place. It's clean, it's green, it's reliable. On this side of the House, we don't know where they're coming from. They're not in favour of renewable; they're not in favour of nuclear; they're not in favour of so many things. They have no plan. Both opposition parties have no plan when it comes to energy. On this side of the House, we have a plan, and we're acting on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: If this is your plan, it's a very scary thought.

When our government invests in the energy sector, it should be for the benefit of everyone in Ontario. Signing contracts with for-profit private energy companies leaves Ontarians on the hook for billions of dollars if those contracts are cancelled. We saw it with the gas plants.

We're seeing it with the sell-off of Hydro One, which will benefit shareholders over regular Ontarians too.

My question to the Premier is this: What will it cost, this time, to get out of a contract that the government is cancelling to serve its own political interest just before an election?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: We're very, very proud of the electricity system that we have in the province. We have an adequate supply of power. The IESO has told us that very clearly. So when looking at the power that we have in our province, there was no need for us to continue to move forward with the LRP II decision. We were able to suspend that and actually save \$3.8 billion to the rate-payers, because we know that's important.

We understand that some families are having difficulty when it comes to their hydro bills, so finding ways to help them is important for this government. We've done just that. We made sure we brought forward our bill that's permanently reducing bills by 8% come January 1; 330,000 families that live in rural, remote or some northern parts of the province will see that reduction go up to 20%. The ICI program, as I talked about earlier, is helping businesses right across the province, and we're looking forward to helping them all.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: This past weekend, I was in my riding, and there were lots of questions about eHealth—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who, please?

Ms. Catherine Fife: This is to the Premier—the modernization of eHealth, the optimization, the leveraging of eHealth. This Premier and her Liberal government seem obsessed with privatization: private energy contracts that build in profit margins for companies, selling off Hydro One to the private sector and now asking their privatization expert, Ed Clark, to figure out the sale price of eHealth assets.

If she is not planning to sell off part or all of eHealth, why did the Premier, and the Minister of Health in his letter, ask Mr. Clark to figure out how much money the province can get for it? It's a good question.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I have to repeat, and I'll repeat it as many times as I need to, that eHealth is not for sale, nor are any of its components—the records that are held within. In fact, Canada Health Infoway, to a large degree, inspired us to approach Ed Clark because Canada Health Infoway has valued electronic medical records and the eHealth system in Ontario as providing substantial benefits to the province. It has actually attached a dollar value to that.

I think it's important, as we look forward to taking advantage of opportunities, new technologies and the strength that we have already seen in the building of eHealth in this province, that we look at the assets that we have and we do an inventory to see what assets we have and we use that to build a stronger eHealth program.

We identify if there are gaps; we fill those gaps. It allows us to invest more in public-facing eHealth aspects as well. This is the kind of work that Ed Clark is helping us with.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Clark spent \$6.8 million on consultants to come to the conclusion that the province should sell off Hydro One. Now the Premier and her Minister of Health have asked him to put a value on eHealth. Surely Mr. Clark won't be doing this alone, for free. How much will the people of Ontario be paying the high-priced consultants so that Mr. Clark can make the case to privatize our eHealth assets?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, we're not selling eHealth. We have no plans to. We won't be selling it. But it gives me the opportunity to talk about those assets that we're asking Ed Clark to value. About a decade ago, less than a million Ontarians actually were benefiting from electronic medical records, and today, more than 10 million Ontarians have an electronic medical record. There are 12,000 providers that are providing that service to them, right down to the family doctor or nurse practitioner, where we know that more than 80% of primary care providers are using electronic medical records in their practice. We have medication histories for all our seniors that are accessible in all our hospital and emergency rooms.

Imagine that. Before, when I was practising as a doctor in a hospital, I would have to go into the backroom and pull the files for seniors, which would often be very big. Now we have immediate access to their medication list for seniors in hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Modernization, optimization, leveraging, eHealth—we need a privatization thesaurus on this side of the House to keep track of what's happening with this government.

The Hydro One sell-off has been disastrous for the people of this province. The FAO confirmed that we will be in a deficit position after the next election because of revenue loss. We've also seen rates so high that families are forced to choose between saving for their children's future or paying for their bills. This is the reality of the people of this province.

Consultants are about the only group who have done well by the Premier's wrong-headed sell-off. The people of this province paid the last consultant bill of \$6.8 million. Will the Premier tell us now: How much will it cost Ontarians in consultants' fees for her to decide to sell off another vital public asset—our eHealth asset?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The third party can try to spin this any way they want, but the truth is, we're not selling eHealth. We actually want to make it better and stronger and take advantage of the expertise that exists in this province and, indeed, around the world. We're going to be doing it. It's explicit, my letter in concert with the Information and Privacy Commissioner, because paramount is the protection of that health data of individual Ontarians. We have to admit that, even for laboratory test

results—we have almost three billion lab test results for nearly 10 million Ontarians stored digitally, stored electronically. We have more than 700,000 hospital reports that are sent digitally every day to patients' primary care providers so their family doctors can provide better care. This is an amazing system that we've built up over the past decade.

We have much more work to do. By having Mr. Clark look at the assets, he can help us understand how we can make a strong system even stronger.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mrs. Julia Munro: Today, my question is to the Premier. Don Chapman and Jim Chapman are the owners of Lakeview Vegetable Processing. They are here today in the gallery to join us. They have made many efforts to reduce and conserve power. The nature of this vegetable processing work is both energy-intensive and weather-dependent.

This year, their bill is set to exceed \$1 million, up 67% since 2013. This hydro usage hasn't differed much, but the bill sure has.

1100

This year they hired a paid hydro consultant. The consultant says that the best option for them is to actually use more hydro—yes, more hydro; you heard that correctly. You see, by using more hydro, they have a chance to apply to a different class of hydro user.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mrs. Julia Munro: They expect that doing so might save them \$100,000 a year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Premier, my constituents—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I stand, you sit, please.
Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you for bringing forward that question, because I think it's very important for us to talk about what we did with the bill that passed last week. We're actually lowering the threshold for many businesses that couldn't qualify for the ICI program—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm looking.
Finish, please.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very happy to be able to tell them that they actually need to contact their local utility to see if they do qualify for this, because we've lowered it from three megawatts to one megawatt. That's over 1,000 other businesses across this province that can qualify for the ICI program. I know many greenhouse growers in the southwest of the province are very excited about this, because they will now be able to qualify for this, and that savings is significant. It's up to a third of their electricity bill that they will be able to qualify for by this change that we passed in this House last week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?
The member from Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Back to the Premier: We just heard about the pressure on the processing vegetable sector and, as the Ontario Chamber of Commerce reports, a 383% increase in hydro bills on this government's watch.

When will the Premier stop signing energy contracts we don't need? The LRP II has been suspended, but the Minister of Energy has said himself that projects under an earlier program known as LRP I—that includes all the FIT programs—will still go forward.

With business and residential customers paying the bill, when will the Premier stop selling surplus energy at a loss? When will the Premier restore basic economics—matching supply and demand, for example—and restore rational decision-making to Ontario's electricity sector?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.
Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, I'm sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, I know you are—very sorry.

Minister.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise and, of course, answer this question, because on this side of the House, we're very proud of the work that the Minister of Agriculture is doing with all of our farmers right across the province, meeting the goal of the Premier to make sure that we have 120,000 more jobs in this sector. We're doing that by making sure that we can work with them when it comes to energy—by the ICI program, for example. We can see the benefits that many of these businesses can get, especially in the agriculture sector, when they reduce their bills from the ICI program. Many small farms will also benefit from the 8% reduction that we're going to see come January 1.

But the one thing that I do have to comment about is when he talked about "rational." On this side of the House, we're very proud of making sure that we closed all coal-fired generation in this province. On that side of the House, the PC Party are very pro-coal. That's the only way that they can talk about getting things back to the way they were. It's unfortunate—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

NURSING HOME DEATHS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. This hour, we have just learned about a horrific multiple murder investigation in Woodstock and London. Police have revealed that at least eight elderly residents of long-term-care homes were murdered between the years 2007 and 2014. Our hearts go out to the families and loved ones of these victims. But there is a genuine question that people are asking this morning: How do murders go undetected for nearly 10 years inside any long-term-care home in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to join the member opposite in recognizing that this is an extremely distress-

ing and tragic, tragic thing for all of the families involved. I don't think there's anyone in this Legislature who would not agree that this is a tragic, tragic circumstance.

I know that the member opposite knows that it would be inappropriate for me to comment on an ongoing police investigation. The police have made it clear that there is no threat to safety, and we now need to let the police do their job.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Of course the investigation is ongoing and the matter is before the courts, but these horrific multiple murders raise serious questions of oversight by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and they need to be asked.

Again, my question is straightforward: How do eight murders happen in long-term-care homes without the ministry noticing?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I do want to echo the sentiments that were expressed by the Premier and the member opposite about how extremely distressing a time this must be for the families who are involved in these cases.

As has been stated, it would be highly inappropriate for any one of us to comment extensively on the ongoing police investigation. Police have made it clear that there is no threat to safety, and we do now have to let the police do their investigative work in this matter.

I also want to inform the House that the Woodstock Police Service has set up a phone number for people to share any information as it relates to the investigation. That phone number is 519-537-2323.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of Energy. In 2014, Ontario signed a memorandum of understanding with Quebec regarding electricity trade. The MOU involved an exchange of electricity capacity: 500 megawatts of wintertime capacity was provided to Quebec from Ontario in exchange for an equivalent amount in return for the summer months. This deal was beneficial for both provinces because it helped ensure electricity supply for both provinces when we need it most. In Quebec, they need electricity during the coldest winter days due to their use of electric heat; in Ontario, we need it at the height of summer. This MOU helped to ensure both of our provinces have the supply that we need at these times.

Last week, Ontario announced with Quebec a landmark agreement which builds upon this existing electricity trade with a new expanded deal. Speaker, through you to the minister, could the minister please inform this House about the new electricity trade agreement with Quebec?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to thank the member for that question and her tireless work for her constituents in Kingston.

I was honoured last week to stand with the Premiers, my colleagues and counterparts from Quebec as we announced this landmark, seven-year deal that will help make electricity in Ontario cleaner, more reliable and more affordable.

As the member noted, electricity demand peaks at different times in our provinces and that means there is an opportunity to coordinate our electricity systems in a way that's beneficial for both provinces. Through the expanded electricity trade deal, our province is set to import up to two terawatt hours of clean hydro power from Quebec annually—enough power to power the entire city of Kitchener for a year.

The deal will reduce our system costs in our province by about \$70 million over the course of the deal, and, just as importantly, the imports of cheap hydro electricity from Quebec will offset reliance on natural gas power plants.

I look forward to answering more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you to the minister for that response. One other part of this deal is an agreement around the storage of electricity. Electricity storage is an exciting new field which has many implications for the future management of our system.

Ontario has taken a prudent approach to exploring the value and potential of electricity storage, with many of the technologies still at an early stage. I look forward to future discussions with St. Lawrence College, for example, regarding their energy programs and these new technologies of the future.

1110

One long-standing version of electricity storage is the hydroelectric dam, the ability to store water in a reservoir to be run through a generator only once it's needed, similar to the system that's being used at Beck generating station at Niagara Falls. As part of this deal, Hydro-Québec will allow Ontario to take advantage of its hydro storage capacity.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could the Minister of Energy please explain why this type of storage delivers value to Ontario ratepayers?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I want to thank the member for that question and for highlighting a very important part of this electricity trade deal. As part of our electricity trade agreement, Quebec has offered to store up to 500 gigawatt hours of electricity for Ontario at night. This power will then be returned to Ontario during the day. For context, these 500 gigawatt hours of power could power about 56,000 homes for an entire year.

The reason this is so beneficial is that electricity is often much cheaper at night. A lower demand for electricity drives down the price and many generation sources, including nuclear, wind and hydro, can produce energy at night that could be used at later hours.

Ontario is able to produce the electricity cheaply at night, store it in Quebec and bring it back to Ontario during the day when it's most needed. Our government will

continue to pursue every opportunity to ensure that we have a clean, reliable and affordable system for all Ontarians.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the temperature is dropping and winter is approaching. Ontarians are scared of their hydro bills. I heard from a mother whose hydro bill was almost \$600 a month last winter. Every morning, her family woke up in a freezing house. They were left in the cold until she could get the wood stove going because she couldn't afford the electric heat. She said it was like living in 1900. Even little things like pizza days and art classes had to be cut.

What does the Premier have to say to this mother of three who is scared her family will once again live in the cold because of the cost of hydro?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise and answer the question from the honourable member. It's very important for us on this side of the House to understand that some families are having difficulty when it comes to their hydro bills. That's why we're so pleased with our bill that's actually going to help families reduce their bill by 8%, permanently reducing the provincial HST portion on their bills come January 1.

We also did many things even before that. We ensured that the debt retirement charge has been eliminated for families. The OESP program, which they, I know, don't like—we on this side of the House absolutely like it. It helps families with \$45 a month. If they heat their home with electricity—I don't know the details relating to the specifics of that family, but if they do heat their home with electricity, they can get \$75 a month on top of the other programs that I talked about. That's a very big benefit for this family.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question back to the Premier: Chris Burton is a manager at Sentry Precision in Ottawa. He reached out to me over the summer. I went to visit him. He told me that Sentry Precision was considering winding down one of their subsidiaries because their hydro rates are just too high. He said, "She couldn't care less about the number of companies that close due to the high cost of electricity."

Sentry Precision is one of the many businesses in Nepean–Carleton facing the prospect of shutting down or moving their operations into a more business-friendly jurisdiction.

"Premier Wynne's government has made it all but impossible to do business in Ontario and be profitable," he told me. "I have not given an increase to my staff in eight years, not even cost of living. We are in survival mode."

So I ask: How will the Premier address the businesses like Sentry Precision who can't afford to maintain cost-of-living increases for their employees? How are Ontarians supposed to be able to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: To the Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm absolutely sure that the member opposite explained to that business that we are indeed the most competitive jurisdiction in all of North America when it comes to operating a business. I'm sure that she explained to that business that they're soon going to get an 8% cut in their energy rate, which is a very significant savings. I'm sure she explained that to them. I'm sure she also explained to them that we've entirely eliminated the capital tax that business would have been paying, something her party didn't support but something we did. I'm sure they've also told that business that we now have the lowest effective corporate tax rate in all of North America, 13% lower than the competition in the United States.

I'm sure that member shared all of those facts with the business. I'm very confident that that business, if they do the math, will want to stay in Ontario and continue to grow like so many other businesses are.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Last week, the minister announced changes to disciplinary segregation in the province's jails in yet another review, but based on data received by the Human Rights Commission, a majority of inmates are isolated for reasons other than discipline. Some 40% were for mental health, and this Liberal band-aid does nothing to address that.

The data has a name. Twenty-three-year-old Adam Capay was locked up in isolation for nearly four years under artificial light 24 hours a day. I'm sure that I saw Adam when I toured the Thunder Bay jail, and the minister would have, too. How do this government's changes to segregation help Adam Capay today?

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the member opposite for asking this very serious question, one that we on this side of the House are acting on.

That's why last week I announced these changes in relation to segregation. I have had an opportunity to sit down with Ontario's Human Rights Commissioner, Renu Mandhane. I've also spoken to the Ontario Ombudsman about this. We've introduced changes in our correctional facilities where segregation will be used only as a last resort, where there is no other viable option. We've also reduced it from 30 days to 15 days for disciplinary segregation. We've created a weekly segregation committee review that will review the cases of every individual in segregation, and we've eliminated the loss of all privileges related to segregation. We are improving the data collection.

There is important work to do as part of our transformation in our correctional system, and we're doing that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Segregation is the last resort. It's hard to make something a last resort when the government has cut all supports and it has become the only option.

This government's kneejerk announcement about segregation came a day after the minister knew his ministry's data was going to be released by the human rights commissioner. This government has spent at least \$44 million preparing for a lockout that never came. Surely mental health supports to tackle the crisis in our jails is one area this money could have gone to.

Will the government end indefinite segregation longer than 15 days for all inmates, addressing the crisis in corrections and providing mental health supports for those who need it?

Hon. David Oraziatti: We are working to transform our correctional system. We have in fact hired about 1,100 staff correctional officers since 2013. We've added 36 mental health nurses. We're adding body scanners to help make our correctional institutions safer. We've recently opened the regional intermittent centre in London to help reduce overcrowding.

We take these issues very, very seriously. That's why we also announced last week a third-party independent review of our entire correctional system in Ontario with one of the keys being the reduction and goal of eliminating the use of segregation in Ontario. But as it stands today, we are using segregation as a last resort, only when there is no other viable option. Those supports for the individual the member opposite referred to are in place in all of our institutions.

SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question this morning is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. As a mother of two young boys, André and David, who are enrolled with the Toronto Catholic District School Board, I know that our strong education system positions kids to succeed in life, no matter the path forward they choose. They go to school, they work hard and they take on new challenges.

However, it's difficult for children to learn when they're hungry. Research shows that access to nutritious meals helps children learn but not everyone has access to nutritious meals, including some of the children in my riding of Davenport. Can the minister tell the House what he is doing to help children in my riding and across the province to succeed?

1120

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to thank the member from Davenport for her question. I know that she's a strong advocate for children in her community.

Mr. Speaker, it is so important that young people have healthy diets. We know that not everyone in this province has the opportunity to provide their child with a healthy, nutritious meal. That's why we have a nutrition program

that's delivered right across the province of Ontario. This program delivers snacks, breakfasts and meal programs to thousands of young people across the province. This is a program that we've really built over time. It's an over \$32-million investment by the province. I want to thank volunteers, parents, teachers, principals, and our educational partners for the work they do to ensure that young people get nutritional, healthy diets in their schools.

I'll finish off in the supplemental.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to thank the minister for his response. We have communities across the province that benefit greatly from many of these investments, including communities like my riding of Davenport. Local providers and schools work hard to support kids' learning and development by making sure students get the nutrition they need. Collectively, they are making a difference.

However, we know some of the most remote communities that struggle with access to nutritious foods in Ontario are First Nations communities. Speaker, my question to the minister is this: Does the Student Nutrition Program reach these communities as well?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, I'd like to thank the member for the question. Over 850,000 young people across our province receive some type of nutritional program in their schools or with community partners. We know that there are First Nation communities here in the province of Ontario that have challenges finding affordable and nutritious food.

That's why we've expanded our Student Nutrition Program to over 120 educational settings in First Nation communities that really help support young people as they develop not only their body but their mind. First Nations have worked in partnership with our government to develop innovative program models that meet the needs and strengths in their communities.

We're going to continue to build on those programs. It's a \$4-million investment this year. We know that there's a lot more work to do, but we know we're off to a great start.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is to the Premier. Municipalities are in charge of delivering important services to their residents. It's up to them to ensure that they're making the most of taxpayers' hard-earned dollars. Under this government, hydro rates have continued to skyrocket, and yet they continue to deny they're the problem.

In May of this year, the city of Oshawa received a hydro bill for street lights. The cost of power for lighting the roads was \$3,000. What was the cost of the global adjustment? Almost \$100,000, Speaker, which is outrageous.

Can the Premier explain why she's adjusted the city's bill to over \$100,000, when they're using just \$3,000 worth of power?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Thank you very much for the question. I think it's really interesting for us on this side of the House to get a question from the Conservative Party, the official opposition, when it comes to issues related to municipal affordability. Speaker, many of us on this side of the House, that are sitting in these chairs, used to sit on municipal councils. The reason that we ran for provincial elections in—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm a little concerned that when I ask to keep things quiet on this side, people on this side, while the answer is being put, are provoking as well. It's not helpful. That being said, keep it down.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bill Mauro: One of the reasons that many of us on this side of the House ran for election in 2003 was because we sat on municipal councils from 1995 to 2003, when perhaps the biggest tax shift in the history of this province occurred when the Conservative Party of Ontario at that time downloaded onto the municipal rate base billions of dollars of long-term responsibility that theretofore they had never been responsible for. So to get a question from the Conservatives about municipal affordability—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

Supplementary? The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Premier: The hydro disaster is acute for hospitals and long-term-care homes, where electricity bills spiked by as much as 40% last year. Instead of putting money into better food for seniors, personal support workers or new mattresses to reduce bedsores, nursing homes are forced to redirect \$30 million to cover last year's hydro hikes away from patient care. For one nursing home, a recently built and modern one, that's \$325 extra every month per bed; sadly, more than this government spends to both feed and bathe a senior patient. Yet this Premier calls it fairness and stability in the system.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask her: What's so stable, what's so fair about paying more for hydro hikes than feeding and bathing frail senior patients?

Hon. Bill Mauro: The Minister of Energy has requested this question, Speaker.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It's a very important question that the opposition member brings forward in relation to hospitals and energy bills. I'm very proud to say that our conservation program actually helps hospitals, it helps municipalities, it helps arenas—it helps everyone.

For example, in my own riding, the great riding of Sudbury, the hospital had an event with Greater Sudbury Utilities in which it saved over \$300,000 by participating in one of our Save on Energy programs. The \$300,000 they saved they can now put back into the system to

actually help do exactly what the opposition MPP is talking about: Use the money that it's supposed to be there for in helping families in the health care system.

We have conservation. We have demand response. We have the ICI program. We have so many programs out there. We continue to promote them. Unfortunately, on the other side of the House they just—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, come to order.

New question?

ACADEMIC TESTING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. Last week's failed launch of the grade 10 literacy test online cost nearly 200,000 students an entire school day and months of hard work and preparation. While experts say that an online attack—this is important—came as no surprise, this Liberal government was caught blindsided with their rushed rollout of online testing.

Now, it's back to the drawing board for a Liberal government that continues to let Ontario students down—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Chief government whip, second time.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: While the loss of confidence in our education system is immeasurable, how much will the latest IT blunder cost Ontario taxpayers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. Of course we were very disappointed to learn that the students who had prepared for their online literacy test were not able to do so. This was a pilot that was set up by EQAO after many, many months of testing and building the system, only to learn that, through a deliberate, malicious and sustained attack from entities that were around the world on this system, our students here in grade 10 were not able to complete their online literacy test.

This is absolutely outrageous. Our EQAO officials are looking at what specifically has occurred and doing their due diligence on that, and will come forward to make that information available once it is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Again to the Premier: While the Premier speaks of cyber attacks as if they are science fiction, the reality is, her government should have foreseen this type of scenario. Instead, they were left scrambling last Thursday as students and education workers stared at blank computer screens for hours. For nearly 16,000 students who were—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. While I'm not particularly happy with all of that bluster, to the people on the other side who are looking for me to stop one side or the other: Look in the mirror.

Finish your question, please.

1130

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: For the nearly 16,000 students who were able to complete the test in places like Sudbury and Lambton-Kent, they don't know whether their passing grades will count or if their efforts were wasted.

Again, how much will the failed literacy test launch cost Ontario taxpayers? I'm not asking how disappointed the Minister of Education is. I want to know how much it has cost Ontario taxpayers.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I know that the team at EQAO worked all weekend long to figure out what the source of the issue was. It's actually very consistent with issues that occurred last week at Twitter and Netflix. These types of global attacks are very unpredictable.

I also know that the EQAO folks are doing their due diligence to make sure they discover the source of the issue and to make sure that we're prepared in the spring to execute both an online as well as a paper-based literacy test.

We know that our students prepared very, very hard for this test. That is why I have expressed my disappointment in the fact that they were not able to complete the test. We will ensure that no student is treated in any manner that puts them at jeopardy in terms of the opportunity to write the test in the future and to get the grades that they've earned.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Last year, all parties in the Legislature came together to pass Bill 163, Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act. This piece of legislation was one of several new initiatives to help prevent or mitigate the risk of post-traumatic stress disorder among first responders.

This government has created a radio and digital campaign aimed at increasing awareness of PTSD among first responders, their families and communities, and at eliminating the stigma often tied to PTSD. There's also a free online tool kit with resources for employers and grants for research. These are all important initiatives and resources for our first responders.

The minister also announced an annual leadership summit that he will host, and it's taking place today. Could the minister please tell the House about this summit?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that important question.

Speaker, before I arrived in the Legislature this morning, over 200 people joined me. They were first responders, employers, experts and advocates from all over the province of Ontario who joined me at our post-traumatic stress disorder summit, organized by the Ministry of Labour.

This summit is a very important part of the PTSD strategy that we announced last year. People who are attending the summit today, that's taking place as we speak, are going to share their experiences, the expertise, the best practices, and we're going to mitigate and we're going to prevent PTSD in our first responders.

One of the main goals of the summit is to develop prevention plans. We know they're crucial to the success of all programs.

The keynote speaker was Bob Delaney, a former state trooper and NBA referee. He, along with others, will share their struggles and contribute—

Laughter.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Not this Bob Delaney, Speaker. Another one.

This afternoon, I'll be returning to the summit. We're going to hear from more experts and leaders. I would urge other members of the House to come down and join me at the summit.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I want to thank the minister for his answer and for sharing the details of today's summit with this House. I'm sure that the day will be a success and those attending will feel inspired by their involvement and collaboration.

In the minister's new mandate letter, the Premier asked the ministry to continue improving mental health protections for Ontario workers. The minister has said that it's very important to him, and we see that, following his work on Ontario's Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada has reported that in any given year, one in five people in Canada will experience mental health illness. This is clearly an issue that impacts many people who go to work every day in Ontario.

Could the minister please tell us what else this government is doing to protect the mental health of Ontario workers?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Once again, I want to thank the member for that question.

In the last few years, we've become more and more aware of the issue of psychological health and safety in the workplace. Up until about 10 years ago, people didn't really talk a lot about this. We didn't know a lot about the issues. Now people are talking about it and they're taking action on it.

Our government, the Ministry of Labour as well, takes mental health in the workplace very, very seriously. We're taking some very positive steps in this area, as the member mentioned. The PTSD summit I told you about a second ago is a great way to share best practices. We're seeing action now at the federal level. They continue to raise the issue at other levels of government.

Preventing injuries and illnesses in the workplace and encouraging workplaces to promote psychological health and safety are an essential component of the health, the well-being and economic success of all Canadians. It's mental health month in October; it's a time to celebrate the advances.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Robert and his wife Carol live in northern Ontario. As seniors on a fixed income, they are hurting under this

Liberal government's failed energy policies. They can no longer afford to stay in their home. Carol wears winter clothing and a toque to bed because they cannot afford heat. Significant mold has formed in their home because they can no longer afford to run their dehumidifier.

The Financial Accountability Officer confirmed that households in northern Ontario paid 45% more in electricity costs. Instead of meaningful action, this government responds with band-aid solutions and more talking points. Northern Ontario deserves better.

I ask the Premier, will the government end its failed hydro policies and truly address the concerns of northern Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. It is important for us to recognize that we did act on helping families in rural and northern parts of our province: 330,000 families will benefit from the 20% reduction in hydro rates come January 1. Specifically, seniors, if they heat their home like it sounds they do—I don't know the details, but if they heat their homes with electricity, the OESP program will help them by up to \$75 a month. On top of that, there's the debt retirement charge that has been eliminated, and they also have the tax credit for northern Ontario residents, which is also a significant saving.

I know that the honourable member mentioned the FAO. Well, let's talk about the FAO. He talked about how energy prices are increasing in Canada and that energy costs in Ontario are consistent with the pace of other provinces. We're in the middle of the pack. We recognize and agree with the FAO's report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Premier: Due to your government's failure to manage energy in this province, small businesses in my riding are struggling. A small café in my riding, famous for their pies, has done everything they can to conserve energy; however, they've seen their rates go from \$1,300 to \$3,000 a month. Two thousand dollars of that bill alone is global adjustment and delivery charges.

Speaker, small businesses like the café in southwestern Ontario are on the verge of bankruptcy due to this Liberal government's failed energy policies. Will the Premier explain to my constituents and those throughout southwestern Ontario how small businesses can continue to afford these sky-high global adjustment rates and delivery charges?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm sure the member, like the previous member that asked that business question, would have ensured that the business is aware that, if their bill was around \$3,000, because of the action that this government is taking, they're going to save in the neighbourhood of \$3,500 to \$3,800 a year from the 8% off their hydro bill. That's a significant savings for a small business. I'm very sure that the member opposite would have made sure that they're aware of that.

I'm sure as well that they would have let that business know of all of the work we're doing with small businesses in the food processing area, for instance, where we've got our Red Tape Challenge that's reducing the regulatory burden for small businesses. We've addressed it in the auto parts sector. I'm sure that member would let our small businesses know that. I'm sure as well that he would have let that business know that we're a leader in North America when it comes to producing small businesses, and we'll continue to be.

APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order: the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the appointment of a temporary Financial Accountability Officer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of the Honourable J. David Wake as temporary Financial Accountability Officer as provided in the Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013, and section 77(c) of the Legislation Act, 2006, commencing on October 24, 2016 for a term of six months, or to the date when the Financial Accountability Officer resumes his duties, whichever comes first."

And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that a humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispensed. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex on a point of order.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to introduce Aaron Breimer from the 16th class of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, along with Eric LaClair, Adam Rak and Cass Gilmore from LEAD New York. As well, I would like to introduce another friend, Lynn Perrier. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Trinity–Spadina on a point of order.

Mr. Han Dong: Joining us in the public gallery were students from the University of Toronto—members of the political science students' association. I just want to welcome them and I hope that they enjoyed question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oxford?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Speaker, I'd like to ask unanimous consent for the House to have a moment of silence to recognize the families and be with the families of the people who perished in Woodstock.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let me make sure that I captured that properly. The member from Oxford is seeking unanimous consent, after the vote, to stand for a moment of silence in memory of the people who have been identified as murdered between Woodstock and London. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd also like to welcome to the House today the CEO of the Rural Ontario Institute, Rob Black, and program staff for the advanced ag leadership program: John Zandstra, Larry Van De Valk, Terri Denman, Julie Cayley; and from LEAD, we have Phil Giltner and Tanya Stuart.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to introduce Andy McTaggart from the 16th class of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, as well as Marie Anselm and Chad Hendrickson from LEAD New York.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I'm very happy to have a school from my riding at Queen's Park today. I wanted to acknowledge the grade 5 and 6 students from the Golf Road Junior Public School, and their teacher, Melissa Morton. They will be visiting the Legislature and learning about the beautiful history of our Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to spend a moment to remind all members that we do have a process. If you know that they're coming in the middle of question period, introduce them during the time for introductions. We're in the middle of a vote, and it's very unusual to do points of order before we vote.

That being said, there are circumstances in which we do want to be respectful, especially when guests do arrive. I know you want to acknowledge them. If you know they're coming, please do it during introductions. Thank you.

DEFERRED VOTES

PROTECTING STUDENTS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 PROTÉGÉANT LES ÉLÈVES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 and the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance et la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1149.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On October 17, 2016, Ms. Hunter moved second reading of Bill 37, An Act to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 and the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gretzky, Lisa	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Naqvi, Yasir
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Natyshak, Taras
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Nicholls, Rick
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Oraziotti, David
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Hunter, Mitzie	Potts, Arthur
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brown, Patrick	Jones, Sylvia	Rinaldi, Lou
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Sandals, Liz
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sattler, Peggy
Clark, Steve	Leal, Jeff	Scott, Laurie
Coe, Lorne	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Colle, Mike	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Coteau, Michael	MacLeod, Lisa	Sousa, Charles
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Tabuns, Peter
Damerla, Dipika	Mantha, Michael	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Taylor, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	Martow, Gila	Thibeault, Glenn
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Thompson, Lisa M.
DiNovo, Cheri	Mauro, Bill	Vanthof, John
Dong, Han	McDonell, Jim	Vernile, Daiene
Duguid, Brad	McGarry, Kathryn	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	McMahon, Eleanor	Wilson, Jim
Fife, Catherine	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Soo
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milczyn, Peter Z.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fraser, John	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul	Yurek, Jeff
Gates, Wayne	Moridi, Reza	Zimmer, David
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	
Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 91; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 20, 2016, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

NURSING HOME DEATHS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. However, I would ask that all members please rise, including our guests, to perform a

moment of silence in respect of the victims in Oxford and London.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Therefore, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1154 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: First responders are essential in keeping our communities safe, and volunteer firefighters are an integral part of this group.

The municipality of South Bruce, in my riding, recently acknowledged volunteer firefighters for their years of service. Today, I would also like to recognize these individuals and thank them for their dedication to the safety and well-being of the citizens of South Bruce.

Thank you to Jake Lantz, who is carrying on the family tradition and who is celebrating five years as a volunteer firefighter, and to Darcy Whytock and Kevin Hogg, who are celebrating 10 years.

Thank you to Paul Woodcock, Jeff Robbins, Bill Jefferson and Tom Fischer, who are all celebrating 20 years of service.

Doug Ditner, Trevor Bell, Ron Murray and Gary Voisin: You have dedicated 25 years of your lives to be volunteer firefighters. Thank you.

Last but certainly not least, a great big thank you to Graeme Cassidy, who is celebrating an admirable 50 years of service in our community as a volunteer firefighter.

Applause.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Absolutely. Thank you.

Whether you've been working for five years or five decades, your work and your service have not gone unnoticed. I want to thank all of you for the passion, dedication and bravery you have displayed as volunteer firefighters in the Teeswater and Mildmay communities. Thank you to all of you and your colleagues for keeping us safe at home.

THE HOSPICE OF WINDSOR AND ESSEX COUNTY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Let me tell you about a fundraiser I attended last weekend. It was to raise money for health care—actually, for our hospice in Windsor. You may not know this, Speaker, but our hospice in Windsor and Essex county was the first in Ontario. We've had one since 1979. It's the largest in Canada. In fact, it was the first community-based palliative hospice village in North America. Some 600 volunteers help to provide support in areas from pre-diagnosis to bereavement counselling.

Our hospice couldn't provide the services needed in our area without private fundraising. More than 2,000

local families found comfort through the services offered by our hospice last year. The demand in our area is so great that we opened a 10-bed satellite hospice facility in Leamington earlier this year.

The fundraiser was put on by the local Knights of Columbus. It was hosted by the Knights from St. Peter's Maronite church. The various K of C councils have been putting on these annual events for the past 19 years. It all started with an idea a friend of mine had. He convinced his brother Knights to get on board. Mike Agius is still actively involved and is the K of C liaison to the hospice.

The Knights raised about \$15,000 on Saturday night. That brings their total for the hospice to more than \$180,000 in the past 19 years. The Knights do so much good in our community, and the hospice is just one of the many charities they support.

From Queen's Park to Mike Agius and the Knights of Columbus, thank you and keep up the good work.

WEST NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

Mr. Han Dong: I rise today to recognize West Neighbourhood House and its dedication to helping new Canadians settle in Toronto—new Canadians including those who came from war-torn regions such as Syria.

The government of Ontario has committed to invest over \$22 million over the next two years to 119 agencies across Ontario through its Newcomer Settlement Program, which supports new immigrants and their families as they adjust to life in Toronto and Ontario. I'm proud to say that through this program, West Neighbourhood House is receiving over \$400,000 in funding to support newcomer settlement.

West Neighbourhood House has been in my riding for over 100 years and has helped thousands of newcomers from all backgrounds and cultures to adjust to life in Toronto.

I have the privilege to represent one of the most diverse ridings in all of Canada, and it's thanks to organizations such as West Neighbourhood House that newcomers living in Trinity-Spadina can feel welcome and participate fully in their communities.

I, along with the rest of my riding, am extremely proud of the achievements, hard work and dedication from West Neighbourhood House. It's because of them that Trinity-Spadina is known as a community where newcomers can feel welcome and succeed in Ontario.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I want to share my concerns about the proposed changes to the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The OTF, as we all know, provides funding to organizations that offer unique programs and infrastructure in our ridings. The OTF relies on grant review teams that are comprised of local volunteers who meet with organizations applying for grants to ensure that an application meets a community's needs.

Unfortunately, the government has allowed an increasing number of vacancies to accumulate on the two grant review teams that serve my riding, and I understand many of the grant review teams across Ontario have multiple vacancies. As a result, the OTF is proposing to decrease the number of grant review teams from the current 16 to five much larger teams.

If the Ontario Trillium Foundation proceeds with the proposed changes, there will be less local voices and less local knowledge provided when approving grants for a local initiative. That's not what communities need.

The councils in Dufferin county, the town of Mono, the town of Shelburne and the township of Mulmur in my riding are all raising the same concerns. Both Shelburne and Mulmur have passed resolutions stating that they are "opposed to the proposed changes of the makeup and quantity of the grant review teams that the Trillium board is pursuing." They are "calling on the board to improve the process for filling vacancies to ensure local representation." I agree. The minister needs to focus on filling the many vacancies that exist to ensure grant applications are being reviewed appropriately and in a timely manner, instead of increasing the number of regional teams.

DAN DUMA

M^{me} Lisa Gretzky: Je voudrais que vous imaginiez avoir à quitter votre maison et la famille, et de passer à une autre province afin d'obtenir un emploi.

Imagine working in another province with the goal of returning to Ontario to be with your family always on the top of mind. Speaker, as you know, this is the reality for many people in Canada. I would like to share the story of one man and his family whose story began just as I began this statement today.

This is the story of Dan Duma. When Dan's job at the GM plant in Windsor came to an end because the plant permanently closed, Dan had no alternative but to relocate to Alberta with his wife, Ana. While living in Fort McMurray, Dan was diagnosed with cancer. Dan's health took a turn for the worse. He was hospitalized, and the wildfires that ravaged Fort McMurray soon forced Dan's evacuation to Edmonton. While in Edmonton, Dan was told he would not recover from his illness, and that he and his wife should return to their loved ones in Ontario.

Dan and Ana returned to Windsor, where Dan would live out his remaining days with his daughters by his side. Unfortunately, because of an exclusion in the health care interprovincial billing agreement, Dan was not able to spend the final days of his life in his private residence while receiving home care to keep him comfortable, without facing financial hardship.

Today I will introduce a private member's bill named after Dan Duma, entitled Dan's Law. If passed, this bill would ensure that all Canadians with a serious illness who are covered by any province's public health benefit, who choose to move to Ontario to spend their final moments with their loved ones, get the home and com-

munity care that they need, when they need it, without facing financial hardship. My hope is that all members of this House will support my bill.

OTTAWA CHAMPIONS BASEBALL TEAM

Mr. John Fraser: We all saw the Blue Jays' season come to an end last week, and want to congratulate them, but, you know, Ontario does have baseball champions. In my hometown of Ottawa, we have the Ottawa Champions.

Applause.

Mr. John Fraser: All right. The Ottawa Champions entered the Can-Am League finals—now this is a little earlier in the fall—with the momentum after completing an upset over the first-place-finishing New Jersey Jackals in the semi-finals.

After being down two games in the final series, the Ottawa Champions came back to defeat the Rockland Boulders and capture the 2016 Can-Am League title this past September. It was a long and gruelling season, but the underdog Champions made sure that their name was not just a word across their chests.

I would like to thank owner Miles Wolff and President David Gourlay for bringing the baseball club to our city. After only their second year in Ottawa, David and his team have driven a multi-million dollar business that is supporting our community and helping to foster local baseball and sports interests.

1510

On behalf of my Ottawa caucus colleagues, congratulations to the entire team, as well as the fans in the baseball community in Ottawa for their support. I look forward to watching the Champions defend their league title next May.

DEAN BUNSTON

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today on behalf of my constituent Mr. Dean Bunston of Nottawa.

Mr. Bunston wrote me to express his great frustration with the Liberal government. He told me, "I cannot express enough my concern and disgust with the political landscape that has emerged over the past decade—more specifically, the mismanagement, incompetence, corruption and betrayal bestowed onto the citizens of Ontario over the last few years."

Mr. Bunston goes on to talk about electricity. He says, "Almost every person in Ontario needs and uses electricity and at one point, albeit indirectly, owned the public company that provided it. There does not seem to be any record of plans to sell off Hydro One in Kathleen Wynne's last election platform."

Mr. Bunston continues, "For any government to have plans to sell off an asset that affects almost every person in the province, now and in the future, is an issue that should have been divulged prior to the election." I certainly agree, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bunston also touches on the Green Energy Act. He calls it a disaster and writes that “aside from being totally mismanaged and under-researched, the act will cost Ontarians dearly for many generations.”

It's time that the government started listening to Mr. Bunston. It's time that they smartened up over there. This was one of the best letters that I have received in 27 years, and it's unfortunate that I didn't have time to quote it all. This is a senior citizen who is extremely frustrated. We hear it all the time when we're home on weekends and home on constituency weeks. People have had it with your government. Start listening or get out.

EDDY LEFRANÇOIS

Mr. Michael Mantha: Let's roll, as Eddy would say. Indeed, 25 for 25 is Eddy Lefrançois's goal. Eddy is determined to raise \$25,000 in honour of his 25th year since being diagnosed with ALS. Recognized as an ALS Canada ambassador, he's putting all of his efforts to raising funds and awareness in hopes of finding answers about the debilitating disease.

As some of you may know, most people with ALS lose the use of their legs in the first two years of the disease and do not typically survive beyond three to five years. These statistics show how truly amazing Eddy's journey has been.

Twenty-five years later, Dubreuilville's own Eddy, with his Let's Roll Out ALS campaign, has made it his mission to raise money to find a cure for this devastating disease and support those living with ALS.

Many would like to tell you that his spirit and smiles are contagious. His Let's Roll Out ALS campaign is a true testament of his beliefs that you should always live every day to its fullest and always remain in great spirits.

I encourage you all to visit Eddy's website to read his story and support his campaign. All proceeds go to ALS Canada to fund research and treatment and equipment purchases for those living with ALS—www.lets-roll.ca.

Let's help Eddy Lefrançois reach his goal of raising \$25,000 for ALS research, let's help him find the cure and, as Eddy would say, let's roll.

HINDU COMMUNITY

Mr. Joe Dickson: Ontario, our wonderful home, is home to a large and vibrant community of Hindus—and all nationalities.

Since the first Hindu immigrants began to arrive in Canada at the beginning of the 20th century, the Hindu community in Ontario has made considerable contributions across all fields: science, education, medicine, law, politics, business, culture and sports.

Right from the start, Ontario's Hindu communities helped build our province into the greatest place to live, work and raise families. We're all proud of the achievements of the Hindu community and how they have helped each other and enriched our province.

That is why I will be introducing a bill this afternoon to recognize these accomplishments and contributions to

Ontario. I will be introducing into the Legislature a new bill to recognize October in each year as Hindu Heritage Month.

October is a special month for Hindu Canadians. Each year, three important festivals that members of the Hindu community celebrate occur in and around October. These festivals include Navratri and Durga Puja, which were celebrated earlier this month, and Diwali, the festival of lights, which will begin next week. I look forward to attending a Diwali celebration with the community tomorrow.

In a few minutes, I'll be standing up again to introduce this bill. Should it come to pass, Ontario would recognize the important contributions that Hindu Canadians have made to Ontario's social, economic, political and cultural fabric.

If my proposed bill passes, Hindu Heritage Month would give all Ontarians an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about Hindu Canadians and the important role that they have played to date and continue to play in communities across Ontario.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated October 25, 2016, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FREE MY RYE ACT (LIQUOR STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT), 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA VENTE LIBRE DE WHISKY (MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES BOISSONS ALCOOLIQUES)

Mr. Clark moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act and the Liquor Licence Act with respect to the sale of spirits /
Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les alcools et la Loi sur les permis d'alcool en ce qui concerne la vente de spiritueux.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Steve Clark: This bill is already on the order paper. It's listed as Bill 11 under the former member from Niagara West–Glanbrook, Mr. Hudak. It's called the Free My Rye Act. Under the standing orders I'm able to table it. I think it's a good bill.

I won't read into the statements the explanatory note; Mr. Hudak has done that already.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I appreciate that.

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA DIVULGATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS CONCERNANT LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS

Miss Taylor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 51, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006 with respect to the disclosure of specified information relating to children and services in respect of children / *Projet de loi 51, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi et la Loi de 2006 sur la fonction publique de l'Ontario en ce qui a trait à la divulgation de renseignements précisés concernant les enfants et les services à leur intention.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Miss Monique Taylor: The bill amends the Employment Standards Act, 2000, to provide protection for an employee against reprisal in situations where the employee takes steps in relation to reporting, under section 72 of the Child and Family Services Act, a suspicion that a child is in need of protection.

Part 6 of the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006, establishes a scheme under which public servants may disclose wrongdoing. The bill amends the act to provide that specified persons who perform professional or official duties with respect to children are public servants for the purpose and the part of the act.

The bill also extends protection against reprisal to circumstances where a public servant has disclosed information in relation to the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007.

1520

HINDU HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2016 LOI DE 2016 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE HINDOU

Mr. Dickson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to proclaim the month of October Hindu Heritage Month / *Projet de loi 52, Loi proclamant le mois d'octobre Mois du patrimoine hindou.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Joe Dickson: The bill proposes that by proclaiming the month of October as Hindu Heritage Month, the province of Ontario recognizes the important contributions that Hindu Canadians have made to Ontario's social, economic, religious, political and cultural fabric. Hindu Heritage Month is an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations to live in our inclusive communities across Ontario.

GROWING ONTARIO'S CRAFT CIDER INDUSTRY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA CROISSANCE DE L'INDUSTRIE DU CIDRE ARTISANAL DE L'ONTARIO

Ms. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act / *Projet de loi 53, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les alcools.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I want to mention that I am pleased that I have two co-sponsors for this bill: Mr. Gates and Mr. Potts.

The bill amends the Liquor Control Act so that the markup or tax that the Liquor Control Board of Ontario imposes on the sale of any class or type of Ontario cider, including craft cider, whether at a government store or otherwise, does not exceed the markup or tax that the board imposes on the sale of any class or type of beer, including craft beer, whether at a government store or otherwise.

You might recognize it; we have debated it and supported it in the past.

HOME CARE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT (DAN'S LAW), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SERVICES DE SOINS À DOMICILE ET LES SERVICES COMMUNAUTAIRES (LOI DAN)

Ms. Gretzky moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to amend the Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994 in respect of funded services for new residents / *Projet de loi 54, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur les services de soins à domicile et les services communautaires en ce qui concerne les services financés pour les nouveaux résidents.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The bill amends the Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994. The bill is about people who have public health insurance in another province or territory and then move to Ontario. They will not be subject to a waiting period for publicly funded home care and community services under the act. The short name of the bill is Dan's Law.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find we have unanimous consent that members be permitted to wear ribbons to recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons. Do we agree? Agreed.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to recognize October as Child Abuse Prevention Month in Ontario and to help draw attention to the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies' annual Purple Ribbon Campaign. The Purple Ribbon Campaign encourages Ontarians from all across the province to learn the signs of child abuse and neglect. It reminds us that everyone has a duty—a legal duty—to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect.

I thank the members of the House who are joining me here today to bring awareness to this important cause by wearing a purple ribbon.

Ontarians should never hesitate to report a suspected case of child abuse or neglect. They do not need to be sure a child is or may be in need of protection to make a report to the children's aid society. They only need reasonable grounds for their suspicion. Members of the public, including professionals who work with children and youth, can find contact information for their local children's aid society by dialing 411, where applicable, or visiting my ministry under the website ontario.ca/stopchildabuse.

Child abuse knows no barriers or boundaries and it takes on many forms. It can be physical, emotional and sexual, or it can take the form of neglect: failing to provide a child with basic needs such as food, shelter and safety. Sadly, every year, children's aid societies across the province receive many reports of alleged abuse and neglect. This sobering reality is what drives our government to be there for children and to give them the support that they need. That is why I call on all Ontarians, Mr. Speaker—neighbours, colleagues, coaches, friends, pro-

fessionals working with children—to be vigilant and report any reasonable suspicion they may have to a children's aid society.

In support of Child Abuse Prevention Month, my ministry is conducting a public awareness campaign to inform the general public of their duty to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect, and we are providing all MPPs with campaign material for their constituency office. We will continue to provide funding to our children's aid societies and the association to train protection staff so they can promptly respond to suspected cases of abuse and neglect.

I want to take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to thank all of our workers in children's aid societies for the work they do—the volunteers, board members, management—to protect our children here in Ontario.

Our government is committed to improving the lives of all young Ontarians, especially those receiving children's aid society services. Over the last decade, our government has taken action to make the child welfare system more responsive to individual family needs and more accountable to the public. We have introduced reforms that have resulted in fewer kids coming into care and more children being adopted or placed into permanent homes. We have taken action to better support young people previously and currently in care of the children's aid societies, and we'll continue, Mr. Speaker, to work with children's aid societies to build a sustainable system that achieves better outcomes for children and youth who rely on us.

While we have taken important steps to improve the child welfare system, we know that there's a lot more work to be done, and that is why we're working with service providers, youth, families and our partners to implement a strategy to better drive outcomes for children, youth and family services. It will support accessible and coordinated services that are more responsive to individual family and youth needs, and the strategy will drive quality and consistency within the child welfare system. It will strengthen governance and accountability through improved monitoring, oversight and reporting, as well as more transparency. And in collaboration with indigenous partners and leaders, we will include a unique approach to indigenous communities.

Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard to promote the protection of our children and youth. But reporting and ending child abuse and neglect is a collective responsibility for all of us, and I urge all members of this House and all Ontarians to learn the signs of child abuse and neglect and to report when they suspect anything is going wrong to your local children's aid societies.

I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to the members of the Legislature for supporting this cause, and, again, thank you to our children's aid societies here in Ontario.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Laura Albanese: I rise today to remind my colleagues that October is Hispanic Heritage Month here

in Ontario. This month is a great opportunity for the more than 400,000 Ontarians who are of Hispanic and Latino origin to come together and pay tribute to their shared culture, not just with one another but with millions of others around the world.

1530

I would like to acknowledge my friend and colleague Cristina Martins, the member from the riding of Davenport, for her tireless efforts to champion Bill 28, An Act to proclaim the month of October as Hispanic Heritage Month. Speaker, October was chosen as the month to celebrate Hispanic heritage because of the significant historical and cultural events associated within it.

One historically significant event occurred on October 12, 1492. It is the date that Christopher Columbus first reached America. That day is better known to the Hispanic community as el Día de la Raza. This is only the second year since this House proclaimed October as Hispanic Heritage Month, but already I can feel it becoming one of our most joyous celebrations. It is not hard to understand why. The act provides our province with an opportunity to celebrate and recognize the contributions of Hispanic and Latin American communities to modern-day Ontario.

Speaker, I'd like to acknowledge how Hispanic painters and muralists have brightened our world and given us a window into our souls. Individuals like Frida Kahlo, Salvador Dali and Gabriel García Márquez have made immense contributions to art and culture in our society.

Frida Kahlo de Rivera was a Mexican painter known for her self-portraits. Her work has been celebrated internationally for its expression of Mexican national and indigenous traditions, and also for its unique depiction of the female experience and form. Her husband, Diego Rivera, was an important Mexican painter and muralist whose work can be found throughout Mexico and on art deco skyscrapers in New York and Detroit.

Then there is perhaps the greatest of all Spanish artists and painters: Pablo Picasso, who dominated the world art scene for most of the 20th century, and whose influence remains unrivalled to this day.

The rich contributions of these giants of the Hispanic community are well known.

We must also recognize the outstanding achievements and lasting influence of the Hispanic community right here in Ontario. Over the years the Hispanic and Latino Canadian community has added much richness to Ontario's cultural fabric, with many luminaries in arts, culture, medicine and humanitarian initiatives.

In sports, we have Raphael Torres, a National Hockey League and Team Canada hockey player born and raised right here in Toronto, as well as Miguel Cañizalez, an El Salvadorian soccer player raised in Toronto, who made several appearances on the Canadian national team.

In the musical field, we have Carlos del Junco, a Cuban Canadian harmonica musician, and José Miguel Contreras, vocalist of By Divine Right, a Toronto-based rock band.

Speaker, it is extremely important to remember that Hispanic contributions are also present within the different levels of government, which we all know play a direct role in the influence of our day-to-day lives. The Honourable Sergio Marchi, former MP for York West, former Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and Canadian ambassador, although his family was of Italian background, was born in Argentina and moved to Canada in his early years. Also, as the Toronto city councillor for Ward 17, Davenport, we have Cesar Palacio, who was born in Ecuador.

Ontario's Hispanic and Latin American community began developing as early as 1914. The first significant surge in immigration came during the 1970s, which was a time of great socio-economic and political turbulence in several Spanish-speaking countries. In the 1980s, armed conflict prompted a further influx of immigrants. Most recently, since the 1990s, immigration from the Spanish-speaking world has been characterized as a "professional wave" of individuals travelling to Canada to study and work.

Ontario's Hispanic and Latin American community hails from the many Spanish-speaking countries, including Spain, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador and Peru, just to name a few. While these newcomers come to our province from a number of nations, each with its own distinct culture, Spanish speakers developed a shared community and gathered in certain hubs around our province and our country, such as Toronto's Kensington Market. Between 1996 and 2001, the number of Hispanic peoples in Canada increased by 32%, Mr. Speaker, while the overall population grew by only 4%.

Spanish is Canada's most-spoken language after English and French and has been the fastest-growing foreign language spoken by Canadians since 2001. Spanish is a very important international language, and it is increasingly useful to speak and understand the language in many parts of the world.

The fact that Spanish is one of the most-spoken languages in Ontario, outside of English and French, is good news for our province. The Toronto Hispanic Chamber of Commerce approximates that the economic impact of Latin American businesses only in the Toronto-area economy is between \$49 million and \$74 million annually. It's hard to argue with the fact that the influence of this population on our province is very significant. We are fortunate indeed to be one of the primary destinations in Canada for Hispanic and Latin American immigrants.

In my riding of York South-Weston, I am honoured to represent a growing and vibrant Hispanic and Latin American community that is contributing to our province's prosperity and growth. Some of the businesses in my riding include Las Americas Restaurant, Rancho Latino restaurant, Julio Quality Meats, El Tipico Ecuatoriano and Café Las Americas.

I am also fortunate to have York Hispanic Centre located in the heart of my riding. The centre provides essential services to the Hispanic Canadian community to help them become established in our province. Some of

the programs and services that are provided include settlement services for newcomers and educational workshops.

Remarks in Spanish.

I encourage all members of the House to join me in extending best wishes to the Hispanic and Latin American community as they participate in this month's celebrations. Thank you. Muchas gracias.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac: It is now time for responses.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm honoured to rise today on behalf of my leader, Patrick Brown, and the PC caucus to recognize October as Child Abuse Prevention Month. One of the most important duties we have as legislators is to ensure the safety and security of our province's children and youth. Our children and youth are the future, and it is paramount we protect each and every child and allow them to reach their full potential.

It's imperative we raise awareness about child abuse, and that starts with raising awareness about the signs and various forms of abuse. Whether it is neglect or physical, emotional or sexual abuse, if you notice any signs of abuse, speak up and share your concerns with your local children's aid society. It can make a world of difference in a child's life.

Each year, our province's children's aid societies receive over 160,000 calls from individuals concerned about the safety of a child. While I'm happy to see that individuals are making that important call to protect our province's children, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to improve the child protection system.

In last year's annual report from the Auditor General, she noted that there is a lack of oversight by the ministry in ensuring our child protection system is providing the best care to our province's children and youth in care. Another significant finding by the auditor is the fact that the ministry is not ensuring that children's aid societies are implementing recommendations arising from investigations into the deaths of children involved with societies.

Two of the most significant inquests in recent years were the inquests into the deaths of Katelynn Sampson and Jeffrey Baldwin. Both inquests resulted in a total of 276 recommendations to improve our child protection system in Ontario—276. Clearly, much more work needs to be done.

I want to finish off by reminding the minister about the ongoing labour dispute at the Peel Children's Aid Society. I am concerned that the strike at Peel Children's Aid Society is impacting services provided by Peel CAS. I call on the minister to ensure that services are not being impacted during this labour dispute so that children in Peel remain safe and get the services they need.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Lorne Coe: It's a pleasure to rise today as the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus liaison to the

Latin American and Hispanic community in the greater Toronto area and speak about Hispanic Heritage Month. It's a celebration of Hispanic traditions and cultural influences of all Latin roots throughout the world. It provides residents and visitors alike with the opportunity to celebrate, enjoy and experience the rich heritage of Ontario's Hispanic culture and to acknowledge the many significant contributions that Hispanic Canadians have made.

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The Hispanic community is committed to preserving its rich cultural heritage and its important contributions to the social, cultural and economic fabric here in Canada, as well as in Ontario. The Hispanic community is culturally cohesive, and yet there are 21 Hispanic-speaking Latin American countries, and each adds so much to the cultural richness of our province.

This celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario gives us an opportunity to pay tribute to new cultural traditions as well as the merging and adapting of fresh experiences with Canadian mainstream traditions. My riding of Whitby—Oshawa is home to many residents from the Hispanic community, and I am proud to celebrate with them their rich heritage and culture.

In this Legislature—we pride ourselves on being tight-knit communities, where people of all cultures are welcome, respected and are able to live in harmony with each other. I'm so pleased to have had the opportunity of speaking once again, celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month.

I'll be hosting a reception this Wednesday for members of the Latin American Hispanic community in the caucus boardroom between 6 and 8 o'clock.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the NDP caucus and my leader, Andrea Horwath. Child Abuse Prevention Month is a campaign led by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies to spread awareness about the importance of reporting concerns about the safety and well-being of children.

Sadly, there have been many inquests into the tragic deaths of children under the care of child protection services. Many of these devastating situations might have been prevented if community members were more aware of their duty to report abuse and neglect. However, it must also be recognized that this government is not living up to its role to prevent the abuse and neglect of children on many accounts.

While abuse and neglect can occur in the home, children and youth across our province are also being deprived of their opportunities to thrive because this government fails to live up to its promises and acknowledge its shortcomings across so many government systems. We continue to hold youth in solitary confinement, even after the Auditor General and the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth called for an end to this practice.

Wait times for mental health services are out of control. Children do not have adequate access to programs, which is leading to tragedies, especially in indigenous communities.

Yes, it is important to report suspicion of abuse and neglect to child welfare services, but we have a child welfare system that was facing a three-year funding freeze as of the beginning of this year. It is an overburdened system, and it means that children do not get enough support from their caseworkers. It also means that child protection workers have to make life-changing decisions for families with less time and resources.

This government failed to pass the youth Right to Care Act, which would extend services to children in care across the province from age 16 to 18. How many of us would expect our children to thrive without supports at the age of 16?

The child must be at the centre of decision-making and their voice must be included. This government needs to step up, acknowledge and act on the massive funding deficiencies in services affecting children and youth. Our children are our future.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm honoured to rise today on behalf of the Ontario NDP caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath, in my capacity as critic for citizenship and immigration, to join our voices to the celebration of October as Hispanic-Latino heritage month in Ontario.

Hispanic and Latino Canadians represent an array of distinct and vibrant cultures, each of which enriches communities across our great province and country in invaluable ways. They run successful businesses; teach our next generation of leaders; innovate in the arts and sciences; and if you're Raffi Torres, you play hockey, too.

While there have been Hispanics and Latinos in Canada as far back as the early 1900s, the first major wave of Hispanic and Latin American immigration to Canada occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. The waves of immigration during that period formed the very foundations for Hispanic and Latino communities in Canada, including in my hometown of London, Ontario, and made the Spanish language one of the top 10 mother tongues in Ontario. Their stories and lived experience in the diaspora also illustrate the ways that transnational identities can be formed, as events unfolding in their homelands continue to affect them here in a new home country.

Hispanic-Latino heritage month is a time for all people to come together and learn about this rich history because there is such diversity within the Hispanic-Latino community itself. These remarkable Ontarians belong to a broad group that encompasses more than 23 different nationalities. While there are shared linguistic and cultural characteristics, this is not a uniform community, but rather one with multiple identities and experiences that is shaped by each country's history.

Ontario acknowledges these vital identities and their many contributions while eagerly joining the celebration

of Hispanic and Latino culture and people. With more than 400,000 Ontarians of Hispanic and Latino descent in our province, we know that it is our diversity that strengthens us collectively as a province.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Hispanic-Latino community on our shared journey towards building a better Ontario—encouraging all members here today to bring these important celebrations back to their ridings and their communities.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

“Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

“Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

“Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

“Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity.”

I totally agree with this petition, I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Catherine.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further petitions? The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is what 18,000 signatures look like. I will need three pages, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Read the petition, please.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I will, sir.

“Hydro One Not for Sale! ...

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, put my name to it and present it to page Carter to bring down to the Clerks' table.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Granville Anderson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

"Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

"Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge."

I agree with this petition and affix my name to it.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current government under Premier Kathleen Wynne is calling for the sale of up to 60% of Hydro One shares into private ownership; and

"Whereas the decision to sell the public utility was made without any public input and the deal will continue to be done in complete secrecy; and

"Whereas the loss of majority ownership in Hydro One will force ratepayers to accept whatever changes the new owners decide, such as higher rates; and

"Whereas electricity rates are already sky-high and hurting family budgets as well as businesses; and

"Whereas ratepayers will never again have independent investigations of consumer complaints, such as the Ontario Ombudsman's damning report on failed billing; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario are the true owners of Hydro One and they do not believe the fire sale of Hydro One is in their best interest;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To protect Ontario ratepayers by stopping the sale of Hydro One."

I fully support, affix my name, and send it with page John.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon. I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I fully agree. I'll sign it and give it to Do En to bring up to the table.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a staff report has recommended Upper Canada District School Board close numerous schools across eastern Ontario; and

"Whereas access to quality local education is essential for rural communities to thrive; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education removed community impact considerations from pupil accommodation review guidelines in 2015; and

"Whereas local communities treasure their public schools and have been active participants in their continued operation, maintenance and success; and

"Whereas the Ontario government should focus on delivering quality, local education services to all communities, including rural Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To reinstate considerations of value to the local community and value to the local economy in pupil accommodation review guidelines; and

"(2) To work with all school boards, including Upper Canada District School Board, to prevent the closure of rural public schools."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Riya.

DISASTER RELIEF

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition, and I want to thank Dawn and Benoit Proussette from Val Caron in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas at 2 a.m. on March 7, 2015, a Canadian National train derailed just outside of Gogama;

"Whereas this derailment caused numerous tank cars carrying crude oil to explode, catch fire and spill over 1 million litres of oil into the Makami River; and

"Whereas residents continue to plainly observe an oil sheen and find dead fish on the Makami River as well as Lake Minisinakwa, despite the fact that the Ministry of the Environment has declared the cleanup complete;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Environment require CN to continue the cleanup of Gogama's soil and waterways until the residents are assured of clean and safe access to water for drinking and recreation."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Elisabeth to bring it to the Clerk.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

"Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

"Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge."

I completely agree with this petition and I'm pleased to sign it and send it down with page Bianca.

HEPATITIS C TREATMENT

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas currently there are approximately 110,000 Ontarians living with hepatitis C and nearly half of individuals with hepatitis C are unaware they have this disease; and

"Whereas new treatments have shown a 95% effectiveness rate in curing individuals with hepatitis C; and

"Whereas many individuals cannot access these highly effective treatments until they meet restrictive clinical criteria that demand an individual's liver be halfway to cirrhosis; and

"Whereas without access to these new treatments an individual with hepatitis C can cost the health care system up to \$330,000 in health care costs;

"Whereas if adopted ... the Greater Access to Hepatitis C Treatment Act, 2016, would allow every individual in Ontario with hepatitis C to receive treatment upon the recommendation from their physician, no matter what stage their disease is in;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the Greater Access to Hepatitis C Treatment Act, to ensure an individual will no longer have to wait and let their liver further deteriorate before receiving life-saving treatment."

This is my private member's bill so I support it.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a very long petition, so in the interest of time I'm going to shorten it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas our hydro rates have tripled since Conservative governments started privatizing our electricity system, and since Premier Wynne took office less than four years ago, peak hydro rates have increased by more than 50%—faster than the rise in family income and more than 10 times faster than inflation; ...

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate and tangible steps to reduce the cost of energy paid by Ontarians, including:

"(a) using the minister's authority under the Ontario Energy Board Act to issue directives to the OEB to ensure fair and reasonable energy costs are being paid, including the need to take into account low-income needs and other factors driving people and small businesses into energy poverty, and

"(b) stopping the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families and not private" companies profit from this.

I fully agree, Speaker. I'm going to give it to my page from Windsor–Tecumseh, Elisabeth, to bring up to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and remind him that brevity is certainly a sign of wisdom. So thank you for your brevity.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario has amongst the highest hydro rates in North America;

“Whereas electricity prices are expected to keep rising;

“Whereas the Liberal government has created the hydro crisis by signing lucrative contracts for unnecessary energy;

“Whereas Liberal mismanagement has left Ontario's electricity system unaffordable and unreliable;

“Whereas the proposed hydro rebate is merely a band-aid solution; and

“Whereas the rebate is simply too little and too late;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Liberal government to: stop signing contracts for energy that the province will sell at a loss; and stop selling any further shares in Hydro One.”

I agree with this petition and will sign it.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition, and I'd like to thank Sue Réhel from Vermilion Lake Road in Chelmsford for signing the petition, called Time to Care.

“Whereas quality of care for the 77,000 residents of (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes to keep pace with residents' increasing acuity and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours; and

“Whereas several Ontario coroner's inquests into LTC homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels and the most reputable studies on this topic recommend 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

1600

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Amend the LTC Homes Act for a legislated minimum care standard of” 4.4 “hours per resident per day adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Dylan to bring it—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

APRAXIA

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas all children in the province of Ontario deserve every opportunity to reach their full potential; and

“Whereas speech and language pathologists in Ontario are afforded the capabilities to provide a diagnosis of childhood apraxia of speech and receive specialized mandated training; and

“Whereas intensive and frequent individualized professional speech therapy, multiple times weekly, is needed to facilitate verbal speech; and

“Whereas school-aged children with severe and significant speech and language disorders like childhood apraxia of speech are not receiving the quality or quantity of speech therapy outlined as essential by current evidence and research, by either CCACs or school boards;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the government of Ontario to declare that May 14 is Apraxia Awareness Day.”

I agree with this petition, I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Catherine.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Chantal Laverdière from Hanmer in my riding of Nickel Belt, for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Bianca to bring it to the Clerk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for petitions has now expired.

OPPOSITION DAY

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: I move that whereas hydro rates in Ontario are the highest of any province in Canada;

Whereas Ontario needs to stop selling electricity at a loss to neighbouring states and provinces;

Whereas the Liberals and NDP supported legislation that created the current hydro rate crisis;

Whereas the skyrocketing hydro rates have made life harder and more expensive in Ontario under the Liberal government;

Therefore, the Legislative Assembly calls on the Liberal government to:

Take action to stop further rate increases;

Stop any future sale of the shares of Hydro One;

Stop signing energy contracts for power Ontario does not need; and

Restore municipal planning powers over energy projects that were stripped away by the Liberals and NDP.

This is addressed to the Premier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Brown has moved the official opposition day motion. Back to Mr. Brown.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I'm very happy to rise today in support of this opposition day motion. I rise today with the hope that for once this chamber can be home to wholesome and full debate—to put aside the partisan aspects and do the right thing for the province of Ontario, to look at this crisis in energy that we have. This is a real problem that is hurting families across Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, we have the chance to do that here today by passing this motion which calls on the Liberal government to take immediate action to stop further rate increases that are simply skyrocketing. Ontario is in an energy crisis—there is no doubt about that. Any one of us members who took the time to step out of this chamber and have a conversation with Ontario families can appreciate that this is a real challenge.

We heard many stories this morning in question period, and I can tell you that I have travelled to every corner, every community of this province and I've seen the effects of this crisis firsthand. I've sat in kitchens with families who can't afford to put food on their table. I've met with seniors who couldn't afford to turn on the air conditioning in the summer months. I've driven past businesses that were forced to shutter their windows and doors and move to Michigan, Pennsylvania, Quebec and Manitoba because of skyrocketing electricity prices here in Ontario.

It is unbelievable that since 2009, Ontario ratepayers have paid almost \$6 billion to cover the cost of selling electricity to the customers outside of this province.

Interjection: Unbelievable.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Unbelievable. This happened because the Liberals and NDP joined together to pass the Green Energy Act, which has been an unmitigated disaster—a mistake.

The impacts of skyrocketing hydro rates are happening not just in the big towns; they're happening across the province. Whether it's a small town, large urban area, northern Ontario, southern Ontario, it is affecting our entire province. Families are hurting. Businesses are hurting.

This summer I was up in Thunder Bay. I met with the owners of Odena Foods, who struggle every month to pay the hydro bill. Odena Foods—and this is in Kaka-beka Falls; it's actually close to Thunder Bay—pay \$13,000 for their hydro bill. They're worried if they can stay in business. It's not right.

Hospitals and long-term-care homes across the province have seen as much as a 40% spike in their electricity bills in the last year. I can you tell that a hospital in my own riding has said that the government's increase in funding—their very minimal increase—doesn't even cover the hydro increase, let alone collective agreements. Everyone is hurting.

In Mississauga, an arena was forced to raise the price of their minor hockey program because of skyrocketing electricity prices. It's affecting kids wanting to play hockey. There's no aspect of Ontario that this government blunder isn't hurting. This is happening in every single community: in PC ridings, in NDP ridings, in Liberal ridings. The effect of high hydro rates is felt at businesses, hockey rinks, hospitals and long-term-care facilities. Unfortunately, there is no part of Ontario—no families, no seniors, no businesses—that is left untouched by the incompetence of this government.

We heard many stories today in question period of how it has affected every single riding—stories we hear in our constituency offices or out in community halls. Plain and simple, the people of Ontario are finding life harder and more unaffordable under this Liberal government.

It's very, very clear that something needs to be done to challenge this crisis, to alter the path that Ontario is on. Today's bill sets the starting point for that. It's why I said at the beginning that rather than double down on a mistake, rather than refuse to acknowledge the structural problems that this government has created, I hope that MPPs, whether they're on the government side or in the third party, who are hearing concerns at home about hydro bills will not do what may be in their talking points—whether it's the Liberals or the NDP—but what's in the best interests of their constituents.

I realize that the Premier has finally acknowledged that maybe there is a crisis in hydro bills, but the Premier only acknowledged this not because there were thousands of emails to her office and not because Liberal MPPs were hearing it in their ridings; the Premier only acknowledged it when it started to affect the partisan self-interest of the Liberal Party. It wasn't the thousands of emails; it was the fact that it affected the Liberal Party in the Scarborough–Rouge River by-election. It wasn't because you saw headlines in every paper about skyrocketing electricity prices. It wasn't because the Premier got booed at the International Plowing Match. It was because it affected the Liberal Party when we saw a riding that was historically one of the safest Liberal ridings in the city of Toronto reject this government and reject this government's hydro policies. That's why we finally hear the Premier saying that maybe there's a problem.

What we don't want are short-term solutions. What we don't want is to see the government's response to the

hydro crisis be that they're going to pay high-priced consultants \$12 million and spend more millions on self-congratulatory radio ads. What we don't want is to see this government continue to pay the Hydro CEO \$4 million—completely out of whack with Ontario's compensation. The hydro CEO in Quebec gets \$400,000. It's symbolic of how this government is completely out of touch with what a taxpayer dollar means.

1610

I asked the Premier in this Legislature: How can you reconcile the fact that you give the new CEO a \$4-million paycheque, and in Quebec it's \$400,000—where, by the way, they have more affordable hydro rates? The only response I got is, "That's what they pay in corporate America." That's not what they pay in Ontario.

For years, the Liberals would complain, "You prorogued the Legislature; that's horrible." The Liberals prorogued the Legislature supposedly to bring in something significant on hydro. All we got was a band-aid, short-term solution.

The government, with the speech from the throne—I thought that maybe there would be some structural change. All we got was a PST rebate. They got rid of the clean energy benefit, which was actually more relief than the PST rebate. It's a shell game.

Everyone's hydro bills are going to continue to go up. For families, seniors and businesses, the bills are going to continue to go up, and the government is doing nothing. We don't need games. We don't need tricks. We need actual relief. It is hurting Ontario. Band-aid solutions don't cut it for families who have seen their hydro bills—and this is for the average family—go up \$1,000 on the watch of this government. How can a family afford that? No wonder everywhere we go in the province of Ontario, people tell us that life is harder under the Liberal government, that life is becoming more and more unaffordable.

If the Wynne Liberals don't get it, they will vote against our motion. If they do appreciate that there is a crisis in hydro today, they will do the right thing and support our motion. They would pass the PC motion and immediately stop the reckless fire sale of Hydro One. They would pass the PC motion and stop signing energy contracts for power Ontario does not need. And finally, they would restore municipal planning powers over energy projects that were stripped away by the Liberals and the NDP.

But, Mr. Speaker, I don't think they're going to do the right thing today. They want to double down on a mistake. They don't want to actually admit that they are wrong. They don't want to admit that they are taking Ontario down the wrong path. I don't think the Wynne Liberals will be able to put their partisan blinders aside, even just for this afternoon. I don't think the Liberals will pass this motion, because they are that out of touch about the pain that families in Ontario are in, and because they don't actually think we have a hydro crisis. In order to do so, the Liberals would have to admit they are wrong, something they are incapable of doing. They would have to admit they created this hydro crisis. They would have

to admit it was their policies that drove countless Ontario families into energy poverty.

But I will hold out hope. I will hope they will take the action the people of Ontario want. I will hope that they will do the right thing. This afternoon is an opportunity to do just that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to speak this afternoon. Speaker, this is an extraordinary motion, extraordinary in that not only is the motion wrong in diagnosing what's driving up hydro prices in Ontario, but it completely ignores the history of the last, I'd say, about 25 or 30 years here in this province.

We have to ask, Speaker: Who started the privatization of the hydro system in Ontario? I don't know. Look around. I would say it was the Conservative government that actually started the privatization and broke up the old Ontario Hydro. They were the ones who leased the Bruce nuclear power plant to private interests, introducing half a billion dollars a year in profit that we have to pay in our hydro bills. It was the Conservatives who took the debt off the nuclear facilities and put it into stranded debt, which got added to our hydro bills.

Who did that, Speaker? Which party broke up the system, privatized, set things up for the privatization of the whole system, attempted to privatize Hydro One, and then has consistently been an outfit that has supported privatization in this province?

I'd say there's one party here and, frankly, I say to the government, you followed their lead. You carried through on their plans. So to say that we have a privatization or a hydro expense problem in this province and ignore the fact that it was the Conservative Party that started the privatization, that actually set up the structure and framework within which hydro prices have grown out of control, is, let's say, a strangeness of historic proportions.

Hydro rates are going out of control because of privatization. Let's not leave that for a moment. We are paying somewhere between three quarters of a billion and \$1 billion a year in profit to private power companies that weren't part of our bills before Mike Harris was elected. That big chunk of our hydro costs comes straight from the party bringing forward this motion today.

The other thing about this, Speaker—and I've been raising this in question period: When we sign on to private power contracts, our manoeuvring room disappears because those companies can sue the province for lost profits if we should recognize that we have too much power. In the past, if we decided we didn't need some power generation facility and we owned it, we could throttle it back and we could shut it down, and we would do that at the cost of whatever we'd invested to that point. But, no, under the Conservative and Liberal system, we're stuck with paying for the profits for decades. That has made it extraordinarily difficult for this province to actually change its mix of power generation. It has put us on the hook, in the case of the gas plants

scandal, for \$1 billion; in the case of Windstream, for an amount yet to be determined.

When the Conservatives go after green power, it's something that is both consistent with the way they see the world but it is also consistent with what they're selling to their base. They say that green power is the cause of high hydro rates. Not true. If you look at the global adjustment, which many will take a look at, 65% of the global adjustment subsidies go to gas-fired power plants and to nukes. A big chunk of the rest goes to a wide miscellany of expenses. A small part goes to green power. So if you're concerned about subsidies and money coming out of people's hydro bills to subsidize unaffordable power, look at nuclear and look at gas. Understand that at the centre of the problem, the centre of the overproduction: the surplus baseload here in Ontario.

The Liberals have their own reason for agreeing with the Conservatives. They have, let's say, presided over this huge rise in hydro prices, and they know it's indefensible but they try to defend it by saying, "It's in a good cause. We shut down coal. We've got clean air." It serves them to use green power as a shield that the Conservatives can batter and batter and batter. But it's dangerous because if you're actually going to do something about climate change and it's threatening your riding, Speaker—if you have farmers in your riding who are going to have to deal with drought in years to come, they're going to worry about this. If you're in a riding that is an area that's going to be hit by tornadoes and more extreme weather in the years to come, you're going to be worried about this.

Blaming green power for high and rising hydro prices closes the door on taking the effective action that's needed to deal with climate change. For the Liberals to sacrifice green power so they can justify their gross mismanagement and ongoing privatization of the system satisfies both those parties, but it is not an accurate characterization of what's going on in Ontario.

Speaker, there's no doubt in my mind that the sale of Hydro One has got to stop. But I know that when this first came forward, the Conservatives were very confused about what to do. They were the ones who first proposed selling it off, under Ernie Eves. Let's face facts. Who set that ball in motion? Who actually changed the laws under Ernie Eves to make it easier to sell off Hydro One? It was the Conservative Party.

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Mr. John Yakabuski: Did they sell it?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Frankly, they tried the best they could. They made sure that it was set up. They greased the wheels.

The Conservatives were only blocked from doing it because a court case blocked them. They got too close to an election. They backed off, but not because of any ideological commitment to public power. Let's face facts.

When we look at the big risks to our hydro bills in the years to come, we're engaged in refurbishments that, in the history of this province, have come in at double or triple the original budget—double or triple. So right now,

you're talking about power from Darlington at 8 cents a kilowatt hour that comes in at 16 or 24 cents a kilowatt hour. That will be devastating for Ontario.

I've never heard the Conservatives say, "We want to see the business case for taking this risky decision." The Liberals have not put together a business case for this risky decision. Their business case is to compare it to gas, not to conservation, not to demand management, not to imports from Quebec. They are focused on one thing, as is the opposition.

In the end, they're far more focused on making sure those sectors are happy than making sure that the price of electricity in Ontario is something that's affordable and is set at a level that will allow us to prosper, to grow economically.

If you bring forward a motion and you ignore your history as the privatizer-in-chief and a cheerleader for privatization, you don't have credibility on this file. You do not have credibility on this file, and they do not have credibility on this file.

Speaker, I've heard the Conservatives say, "Well, you know, we have these high prices. You phase out coal and green power comes in, and you've got very, very high prices." But I have to say—and this is a credit to all three parties—that all three parties in this chamber supported the shutting down of coal. So the question I'd ask, which is not addressed in this motion, is if the Conservatives were going to shut down coal, what were they going to replace it with? I'll tell you this right now: not conservation, because they've never been fans—I don't hear that language from them—and not community-based power.

When we were debating the Green Energy Act, I tried to change that act so that we'd have investment in rural communities across Ontario, so they could develop that green power. Why? Because in Germany and Denmark, they've used community-based green power companies—co-operatives—to develop the bulk of that power, which is why it has community support. You need that. The local community has to see the dollars flowing in. They have to see that financial benefit. That's why, in parts of Denmark and Germany, rural communities fight each other to see who gets the wind and solar contracts, because they know it means money and jobs in their communities.

But the Conservatives wouldn't support that in committee. When we tried to amend the bill, we did not get a vote in favour of that, in support of community-based and, in reality, rural- and northern-based corporations, co-operatives, non-profits that could have developed that power.

So to come forward and say that we've got a huge problem with pricing, and to have not supported community-based power when they had the opportunity; to have pushed forward a privatization agenda that set the stage for the Liberals; and, really, to ignore where the bulk of the subsidy dollars are going in Ontario, makes no sense at all.

We have a huge problem—the Leader of the Opposition mentioned this in his speech—where we have

surplus baseload generation. We have too much baseload, Speaker, too much. That's why we're exporting billions of dollars of power every year at prices far below what it costs us to produce it. Yet when they were asked, in the Scarborough–Rouge River by-election, if they supported the closure of Pickering—which is a big part of that surplus baseload—they said no. Have they done an analysis to determine whether that's good for Ontario or bad for Ontario? I don't think so. It was really totally automatic, reflexive: "Yes, we support it going ahead." For a party of business to not actually look at business studies, business cases and business analysis makes no sense.

This motion is not consistent with the principles that I've heard expressed by the Conservative Party. It's not a motion that recognizes the reality in this province. In many ways, I think it's very helpful to the government, because it continues their story that we have higher prices because we have green power, and thus speaking to a big chunk of the population who see the necessity of that.

It is a bad motion. It's unfortunate, because there are some elements that are useful. But it's a bad motion. It deserves to be defeated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's my pleasure to contribute to this afternoon's debate on the latest PC opposition day motion. Speaker, not surprisingly, the government will not support today's opposition day motion. The government's reason for not supporting the motion is actually pretty easy to comprehend: All of the assertions made in the motion are demonstrably wrong. It's no surprise, then, that all of the conclusions drawn from wrong assertions are also wrong.

Let's take the motion from the top. It begins by asserting that electricity rates in Ontario are Canada's highest. That's wrong; Nova Scotia's power rates are the country's highest. Now, the PC Party has normally—wrongly—asserted that Ontario's power prices were North America's highest. But the last time the PC Party brought up a shaky opposition day motion, the government pointed to New England power prices. Those power prices, in places like New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts and New York, are North America's highest. New England electricity prices are roughly double—double—those of Ontario. In a similar vein, California's power prices are much higher than Ontario's. And those of the states in the Great Lakes basin are also generally higher, except where those states are heavily dependent on burning coal to generate electricity.

Coal-burning jurisdictions tend to have a cheaper power price than Ontario, but there's a catch: In December 2015, both the United States and Canada joined virtually every other country on earth with an organized government in signing the Paris climate change accord. Both the United States and Canada signed it. However, unlike Canada so far, the United States has ratified it. That means that for those jurisdictions in the United States that currently burn coal, they've got to turn it off—

they've got to turn it all off—and they've got to turn it all off quickly. What direction do you think American power prices will take in the years to come?

So let's talk, then, about what factors actually drive electricity prices, once we take my friendly colleague's rhetoric and just shove it aside. Let's just talk about what are those actual factors that drive electricity prices. There are actually only four principle factors:

Number one, interest rates and inflation: Interest rates and inflation are very close to zero.

Number two, the cost of fuel: If you're in a jurisdiction that burns a lot of fossil fuels, your cost of fuel is going to be very, very high. If you're in Ontario, where nearly all of your power comes from uranium—which, per block of power generated, costs nearly nothing—from hydroelectric dams, from wind or from solar, your fuel cost is zero. The only thing that Ontario consumes as fuel that generates electricity is during peak power periods, when Ontario generates electricity by burning natural gas. And by the way, that natural gas that gets burned is exactly the same natural gas that you burn in your furnace at home. It comes from the same source, via the same pipelines.

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The next factor that drives the cost of electricity is the cost of people. Once again, there are not that many people who make our electricity system go, and the cost of people is generally about the same regardless of the jurisdiction in which power is generated.

That leaves you with factor number four, and that's the differentiator. Factor number four is capital expenses. When it comes to capital expenses, you're either building and renewing or you aren't. If you aren't, you're not spending any money, and I'm going to come to that in a minute, because not spending any money is one of the pillars of PC Party energy policy.

If you are spending money, if you're renewing your system, if you're building new generation, as Ontario is, if you're refurbishing your nuclear reactors, if you're broadening your generation base, then you're spending a lot of money. How much money did Ontario spend? Ontario has spent, in the last 12 years, some \$35 billion modernizing and renewing our system; and that would include some \$13 billion to renew and enhance our transmission system. All of that money goes to the rate base.

So, in the last 12 years Ontario has cut out coal. We no longer burn coal—none at all, and haven't for two years. Ontario has begun refurbishing our world-class, envy-of-the-planet Candu reactors. We've rebuilt generation and transmission, diversified our electricity supply and invested in a modern system. Those are the things you're either doing or not doing. If you're not doing them, you're not spending any money, but if you are, you're going to be spending money in the tens of billions of dollars.

By contrast, in our neighbouring states in the Great Lakes basin they have been much slower to move away from coal, which means instead of doing it in an

economical, deliberate and planned sense, as Ontario did, they're going to have to rush to do it and it's going to cost them money. Not only are they going to be paying for it in tomorrow's dollars, but they're going to be spending a lot more money than Ontario spent and to do a lot less.

In our neighbouring jurisdiction states, they have not renewed their wires. They have no comprehensive plan to refurbish their nuclear reactors.

Our nuclear reactors, all built around a very standard 800-megawatt Candu design, are all of a similar make and model; and that meant that over at Darlington they've been able to build a mock-up of what a Canadian Candu reactor is. That means that every contractor going in to refurbish our Canadian Candu reactors is able to practise on a mock-up that is accurate to within a fraction of a millimetre. So if they need to use a tool, before they get to go in and use it on an actual reactor they get to practise it on the mock-up. That means that our contractors will be ready. It means that they're not going to get surprised by finding that a cart can't, for example, negotiate a tight corner. It means that when they get in to do the work on the reactor during the refurbishment, while it's live, they're going to know what they're doing because they've practised it before.

Now, of the eight reactors at Bruce and the four reactors at Darlington, two reactors at Bruce have been refurbished. This means that Ontario has done a lot of that learning and that a lot of that learning is reflected in the sophistication of the simulator and the mock-up at Darlington, where the work is going on now. The first Darlington reactor has been shut down.

The motion also asks us about the additional generation capacity that Ontario has built. But it takes extra generation capacity to be able to shut down one and, in the later stages of our refurbishment plan, two 800-megawatt nuclear reactors. It means we've got to have generating capacity available to fill in that gap—and we do. That's part of the reason Ontario will continue to operate the Pickering nuclear station until about the middle of the next decade. Operating that station gives Ontario predictable, economical, safe electricity during the period when six reactors at Bruce and four reactors at Darlington are being refurbished. That's taken a lot of planning.

Again looking at our American partners, they've saddled their electrical utilities and ratepayers with onerous amounts of debt. Ontario's transmitter and its principal generator have clean balance sheets.

By contrast with Ontario, in the United States, their rates have been kept artificially low. Ours have reflected the amount of money that Ontario has put in and invested in refurbishing, modernizing and upgrading our electricity system. What this means, to contrast Ontario with the states that border us, is that Ontario has bought tomorrow's power system, it has paid for it with yesterday's money and it has financed it over its anticipated lifetime at interest rates of very close to 0%.

Let's contrast that. What it means in other jurisdictions in North America, including some Canadian

provinces, is that they have to catch up. They've got to buy today's power system, they've got to pay for it with tomorrow's money and they've got to finance it over its estimated lifetime with interest rates that have nowhere to go but up. Would you rather be there or would you rather be in Ontario?

The opposition motion says that Ontario needs to stop selling electricity at a loss. It is wrong. In 2015, Ontario earned nearly a quarter of a billion dollars from the sale of electricity to neighbouring provinces and states—including, by the way, Quebec. Let's quote you some exact figures. According to the Independent Electricity System Operator, in 2015 Ontario exported 22.6 terawatt hours of electricity. Ontario imported 5.8 terawatt hours of electricity. The benefit to Ontario taxpayers from electricity exports for 2015 was approximately \$228 million—a surplus.

As well, Ontario has earned a surplus of between a quarter and a third of a billion dollars from the net sales of electricity every year for the last six years.

When the party that has proposed this motion was in power, was Ontario importing or exporting? Ontario wasn't exporting; we were importing. We were buying power.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: What did that cost?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm going to come to what that cost us. I just need a little bit of lead-in on that.

The exchange of power between Ontario and our border states and provinces takes place through 26 what are called intertie locations. Those are connection points where the US states and the Canadian provinces, principally Manitoba and Quebec, exchange power with Ontario. Sometimes they sell us power; sometimes we sell them power. A lot of it depends on what season it is, what the weather is like, and does anybody have any power lines down or any generating stations down? Over at the headquarters of the Independent Electricity System Operator, they sit down and meet first thing in the morning, and the first thing they do is they look at the weather and they call up their neighbouring jurisdictions and say, "What have you got online? What problems do you have? What needs do you have?" They'll plan that on a daily basis overall, and they often have to cope with it hour by hour, minute by minute. And the thing about electricity is that it's consumed in the instant that it's generated.

The motion wrongly asserts that capital expenses and legislation undertaken in the last 13 years have created a problem. In fact, it has been Ontario's investment in its power production sector that has solved a problem, and done so ahead of other jurisdictions.

I'd like to talk to you a little bit about what was happening when the PC Party was last in power. They recently have been crowing about the fact that they were selling power at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. Taken in isolation, this claim is accurate. However, to put it in perspective, you have to ask yourself: If you were selling power at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour, what were you buying it at? The fact of the matter is that they were

buying at rates of between \$1 and \$2 per kilowatt hours in many cases. The news that we have to communicate to them is that if you're selling power at a loss, you can't make it up on volume. Ontario took decades-old legislation and brought it into the 21st century. Ontario's changes improved how we plan for the future.

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Among the things that the motion here criticizes Ontario for are the following:

Ontario's legislation in the last 13 years has enabled clean power.

It has allowed local distribution companies to be able to consolidate. One good example is the consolidation of, I think, seven different local distribution companies, including my own local distribution company in Mississauga, Enersource, into a company that at the moment doesn't have a name, but when it comes into being will be the second-largest energy transmitter in Ontario. The largest, by the way, is Hydro One. Hydro One has 24% of the local distribution market, and, by the way, Hydro One has about 1.1 million customers. The next largest will be that newly amalgamated company, including all those seven or eight local distribution companies. It will have just under a million customers, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 890,000 to 900,000. The third-largest local distribution company is Toronto Hydro. Toronto Hydro has about 880,000 customers. That takes up something just shy of 80% of the marketplace, and 60 other local distribution companies compete for just more than 20% of the remaining market.

Another thing that legislation introduced by our government has done is that it has enabled families with modest incomes to benefit directly from electricity supports. This didn't happen on the watch of the PC Party when in government.

Our government has also put in place North America's only comprehensive plan to refurbish our nuclear reactors, which are the envy of the free world in terms of how well they perform, how long they perform, how amenable they are to refurbishment and how economically they generate clean, predictable power.

Legislation brought on on this government's watch has also brought in conservation measures and incentives, something the PC Party never did.

It has diversified Ontario's power supply, something the PC Party only did insofar as they cranked up coal production. Legislation brought in by our government has enabled more consumers to heat their homes with natural gas instead of more expensive electricity or less reliable propane.

Our government has brought in legislation to enable smart meters that now provide an incentive for Ontario homes and businesses to shift power use from peak hours to evenings or weekends.

As well, our government has brought in legislation to enhance consumer protection, to improve cyber security and, very importantly, to address climate change. Right now, Ontario's power supply is more than 90% greenhouse-gas-free. If we're looking at our assets that

don't include the peak power, dispatchable—which means you turn them on when you need them and turn them off when you don't—natural gas plants, Ontario's power production is more than 99% greenhouse-gas-free.

The list is actually a great deal longer, but I would run out of time if I kept enumerating the list of legislative changes that this PC motion criticizes the province of Ontario for having done.

Here's the kicker, Speaker: The PC Party voted against every single one of those measures—every one of them. Everything that benefits Ontario businesses, Ontario families, Ontario homes, the PC Party opposed.

The motion wrongly says that improving electricity supply and distribution, to use its own words, makes life harder. Well, how hard was life under the last PC government when blackouts and brownouts were actually the order of the day? They were common.

Here where I'm standing, in the centre of the greater Toronto area, there were, on the last day of the last PC government, an average of more than 50 smog days every year. In the last four years, including this past year, which was the hottest summer on record, there were no smog days—none. That's not to say that, in the greater Toronto area, we don't generate greenhouse gases, but what we don't do in the greater Toronto area anymore is, we don't burn coal.

Now the sectors to worry about, as far as greenhouse gas production, are industrial, commercial and institutional, and transportation. Those are the sectors that need to shake out the greenhouse gas emissions.

Here's something else that the PC Party did to make life harder for Ontarians during their eight-year watch on government, as they moved toward an attempt to privatize what is now Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One, which were then lumped together and called Ontario Hydro. In a move to privatize them, they chose to take the debt that represents the capital expenses involved in everything that was built post-World War II—right through our nuclear reactors during the big building boom in the 1960s and 1970s—take all of that debt, \$21.5 billion, and transfer it from those two organizations to the taxpayer in the form of the stranded debt charge that, for many years, was on your electricity bills.

Our government addressed that stranded debt charge in a good old-fashioned, common-sense way: We paid the debt. It's done. It's finished. Ontario has paid the stranded debt.

PC power policies had Ontario headed into the cold and dark by 2003, but Ontario's solutions since 2003 have set up Ontario with a more secure, more reliable power supply. On the watch of our government, Ontario has become an annual net power exporter, and it will be more so once the United States must turn off its coal and when the United States reactors reach the end of their useful lives.

Along the way, those policies have attracted more direct foreign investment. They've driven more jobs than any other place in North America. No place else in North America has benefited from direct foreign investment the

way Ontario has, and that means, for Ontario families, more jobs, better jobs and jobs with a future as a career.

It means that Ontario has taken action to slow further rate increases. This sets up what are—something that I've spoken about in the House before—the four principles of Conservative energy policy: (1) As I mentioned before, do nothing. Take your assets and run them into the ground; (2) Burn coal. It's the ultimate quick and dirty electricity fuel; (3) Buy expensive power from the coal-burning Ohio Valley. That's exactly what they did on their watch. If you want to know what people will do in the future, just look at what they've done in the past. Most importantly, the fourth pillar of Conservative energy policy is that when all else fails—and under the Conservatives, all else always fails—blame it on the Liberals.

Speaker, this motion asks Ontario to stop looking into the future and to stop expanding its power grid. I would ask my colleagues in opposition to explain to me, as we all wait for the entry into our market of the electric car, how will we recharge our electric cars. Will we take cars that, at the moment, run on greenhouse-gas-producing gasoline and oil, and will those vehicles have to be recharged by burning coal, which is what the PC Party did?

How would the party opposite power electrified transit? We're all in favour of electrifying our public transit and putting in more light rail transit. I've heard a Conservative-leaning former mayor of Toronto use a slogan that sounded something like "Subways, subways, subways," but those subways run on electricity, not on diesel engines.

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How would we convert from other polluting sources? How would we maintain a growing economy if we can't continue to grow our electricity supply?

This motion asks the government to give municipalities the power not to generate electricity and the power not to allow transmission of electricity through their borders. How might this party have dealt with highway-building in the 1960s and 1970s? Actually, they did deal with highway-building in the 1960s and 1970s, but did they allow municipalities to take Highway 401 and have it meander around every community that might not have wanted to have a highway through it? Those communities now have seen the growth that connection to a modern transportation grid brings to their communities and brings to their families, and the industry that it attracts to their communities as well. That's the reason that power planning in Ontario will always look to the future to bring the best for the entire province of Ontario. But it's also the reason why local wishes have to be taken into account whenever power projects go forward.

Speaker, since 2003, Ontario has, as I mentioned earlier, invested \$35 billion in the electricity system—\$35 billion. It's rebuilt 16,000 megawatts of cleaner power.

Anyone who has travelled in Europe or the United States can see entire fields of windmills. One of the

places that has moved most aggressively into wind power is very Republican Texas. West Texas is full of wind farms. If one flies over the American Midwest, near the southern part of Illinois, and if it's a clear day and you can look out, the number of windmills number into the hundreds. All of these jurisdictions, as they move to doing what Ontario has already successfully done in the last 12 or 13 years, are going to have to buy products and buy services from Ontario firms employing Ontario workers, paying wages to knowledge-intensive, high-wage workers, and they're going to do it with an industry developed on the watch of this government that has gone from zero to 50,000 jobs within the last decade.

Ontario's solar power contains more production capacity than any other in Canada and is one of North America's highest.

I'd like to just close with a few facts on some of the trade that Ontario does with the province of Quebec in electricity agreements. In September 2014, Ontario and Quebec established an energy working group which would, and did, explore working on key energy issues and also opportunities to enhance electricity trade between the two provinces.

Since that began, one of the key benefits to both provinces has been that at the time that Quebec most needs electricity—which, in contrast to Ontario, is the middle of the winter—Quebec can buy from Ontario 500 megawatts of power-production capacity in the middle of the winter. Similarly, when Ontario has its peak power needs—which for us in Ontario is the middle of the summer—Ontario can similarly buy from Quebec 500 megawatts of what would be surplus power generation capacity from Quebec.

What this means is that neither Ontario nor Quebec needed to build excess generation capacity but could take the generation capacity that each province had planned and built over the span of the last decades and share their surplus—for Quebec, a surplus in the summer; for Ontario, a surplus in the winter—with each other. Good neighbours do that. That's been part of the rationale that Ontario has chosen in how and why it's worked to build Ontario's energy future based on a diversified and balanced power supply.

I could go on for a great deal longer, but I think, in summation, these are some of the many, many reasons that, with the greatest of respect to my friends opposite, the government is going to vote down this particular opposition day motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It was—well, I want to say a pleasure, but that would be a misleading statement on my part. It was interesting to listen to the member from Mississauga—Streetsville tell a story that would lead one to believe that Ontario has never been better and that the citizens of this province have never been happier with their electricity system. But I don't think that paints an accurate picture of what we're hearing out there on the ground every day and, I assure you, the members on the other side are hearing as well.

It is not a happy place out there, and they are not accepting the story that they're getting from the Liberals.

Their talking points have changed. First of all, there was no crisis in electricity. It was a cup of coffee; the increases amounted to nothing. And now, when they know they've got a problem—because Raymond Cho delivered them a problem in Scarborough—Rouge River. Here's their narrative now: "Oh, we've done the heavy lifting here in Ontario under the Liberal government, but those other jurisdictions are going to have to deal with that now, and then everybody is going to flock to Ontario for cheap power." Have you ever heard a bigger load of horsefeathers, as Peter Kormos would have said in the old days—that people are going to flock to Ontario?

I've been talking to some of those people who are thinking of flocking out of Ontario: the manufacturers, people who we met with today, the Association of Major Power Consumers, who have their backs against a wall because in this climate here in Ontario, they have now reached a point where there is no more wiggle room. The cost of power has reached a point where these manufacturers, these heavy consumers of power, have no more wiggle room. They're now looking at the possibility of having to move their operations elsewhere, to another jurisdiction, possibly the United States. All you've got to do is look at the auto industry and see how the auto companies are making investments in America today: building new plants, putting new production into America while we're stagnating here in Canada.

I wanted to get to the motion. This motion is all about the price of power and how we got there. I want to make sure that it's very clear. My friend from the NDP the member for Toronto—Danforth talked about how he thinks that renewable power has nothing to do with the excessive price that we're paying. The Auditor General—who I trust more than any member in this House, including myself—has said that renewable power has cost \$9.2 billion more than it should have cost. So whether or not you believe in the principle of renewable power and green power—the member implied that we are opposed to green power. We're opposed to the price that was paid for green power: \$9.2 billion.

How did we get to that \$9.2 billion? The empowerment to get there, the legislative authority to get there, came from the Green Energy Act. It's the Green Energy Act, I say to my friend, that is the big problem. He says that most of it is nuclear and gas. Well, nuclear provides 60% of the power in this province. It is the safest and most reliable baseload, and it's the one we've got, and we absolutely need to ensure that it continues. But if you look at the cost versus the megawatts produced—or terawatts, if you want to go all the way up to the top—the problem is the price we paid under those contracts.

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What gave the legislative authority to sign those contracts? The Green Energy Act, which was wholeheartedly supported by the NDP when George Smitherman and the Liberals introduced it in 2008 and it passed in this House in 2009. That is categorically the single biggest compon-

ent of the cost of your bill—and the global adjustment, which is essentially the difference between the wholesale price of electricity and the price we're forced to pay because of the contracts we're obligated to honour.

I only have a little bit of time—in fact, I'm running out—because I have other speakers to speak as well. But let's be clear: It is the coming together of the NDP and the Liberals for the Green Energy Act that is the number one reason we have out-of-control electricity rates today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: There's one word to describe this motion, and that's bullfeathers.

The leader of the official opposition is making a very weak attempt to suggest that the NDP is responsible for high hydro rates. In fact, Speaker, as you well know, the only party to consistently oppose any privatization of Ontario's hydro system was the New Democratic Party of Ontario. The Conservatives, under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, were the first to try to profit from dealing away the public's right to keep hydro public. That's when hydro rates started to go up. They started the steep rise in hydro rates that has continued under the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals.

Patrick Brown and the Ontario PCs are not the answer to rising hydro rates. Don't let them pretend they are. Do not allow that myth to be propagated. It's a misdirection. It's a sham. It's a red herring. It's a very weak attempt at confusing the gullible into believing something that is totally untrue.

If you read between the lines of this motion, the misguided PCs would have you believe that the Green Energy Act is to blame for rising hydro rates. Bullfeathers, Speaker—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order. I recognize the member—

Mr. Ted Arnott: I believe the member for Windsor—Tecumseh made a regrettable and unparliamentary remark that he might want to withdraw. I just want to bring your attention to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): If the member chooses to withdraw, I will recognize and accept the withdrawal.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Just tell me what the remark was, Speaker, and I'll comply.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I didn't hear it, but it's been brought to our attention. You probably know what it may be. If that would be the case, then I would ask that you withdraw.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: If you didn't hear it, I didn't say it.

Interjection: Totally untrue.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Totally untrue? I withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Bullfeathers, Speaker. It's not the act, but the rates the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals gave

to the green industry to lure them into increasing their technology in Ontario. They gave away the farm. They stripped farmers and municipalities of the right to oppose windmills and solar installations. That was wrong then and it's wrong now. That was the poison pill that was in the Green Energy Act.

We need green energy. We don't need dirty coal. The PCs, the pro-coal PCs—the pro-coal, climate-change-denying Conservative Party of Ontario—is blowing smoke out of their smoke stacks. They are not the answer to lowering hydro rates in this province. They started it all. The Liberals followed suit.

Despite Premier Wynne standing in the Legislature looking you in the eyes, Speaker, looking me in the eye and the people of Ontario, saying that she would never sell Hydro One, Ed Clark and his banker buddies on Bay Street convinced her otherwise. New Democrats have been the only party consistently fighting against the sale of shares in Hydro One. The Conservatives woke up one morning, saw the polls, and only when most people opposed it did they say that they opposed it as well.

So the pro-coal party finally joined the NDP parade of opposition. Now they stand today and pretend to be the saviours. Give me a break, Speaker. It's time for honesty in politics. It's time to end the game-playing. It's time to stand up and be counted. The only party that has opposed selling hydro in this province from day one has been my party, the NDP and Andrea Horwath.

Patrick Brown and his pro-coal party are not the answer. The Wynne Liberals, who broke faith and sold their souls to the bankers on Bay Street, are not the answer. Keep hydro public. Stop the sale of any more shares and don't let these PC wolves in sheep's clothing pretend anything different. You can't trust the Liberals and you certainly can't trust Patrick Brown to stop the sell-off of public hydro.

Many people in Ontario say that you can't trust politicians, and this motion is a perfect example of that. It's worded in such a way as to try and convince those who don't know any better that the Conservatives are the true defenders of public power. Give me a break. The motion is designed to blame high energy rates on the Green Energy Act. That's a simplistic view that totally disregards any Conservative involvement in the hydro rate controversy. Their hands are far from clean, Speaker. You know that and I know that. Hydro rates were on the rise long before the McGuinty Liberals brought in the Green Energy Act.

I'll tell you what: I'm going to skip ahead. I know I'm running out of time.

This motion is all spin. I can just picture the fun that the youngsters, the 19-year-olds in the PC leader's office, had, sitting around his kitchen table, drinking their Red Bulls and Diet Cokes, writing this motion, cracking up with laughter, thinking they were so smart at this misdirection. Imagine: blaming new Democrats for rising hydro rates. What a laugh. Give me a break. No one with any credibility believes that for a moment.

This motion breaks trust with the truth, Speaker. The Conservatives put their credibility on the line, and they

came up short with this one. You can't trust them on the hydro file. You can't trust the Liberals on the hydro file. You can trust the New Democrats and Andrea Horwath, the only party that has consistently stood up to protect hydro and stop the sale of Hydro One. We're the only ones who have done it, and we've done it consistently.

Don't be fooled by this motion. True Conservatives should be ashamed to have their names associated with this motion. It stretches the truth that far. It shatters their credibility. It clouds the real issue: that Conservatives are just as guilty as the Liberals when it comes to privatizing hydro in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member from Windsor–Tecumseh to withdraw a comment that he made just moments before his grand finale.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Whatever it was, Speaker, I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: Back-to-back broadcasters here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Another week and another opposition day motion about rising hydro rates. I'll try and match the bluster that came from my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh just moments ago.

You know what? I've got to say, Speaker, that it's interesting to watch members of the third party get up every day and pretend that they had nothing to do with the soaring cost of electricity in Ontario right now. It's almost laughable when they stand up and say that their hands are clean when it comes to this mess. I've been here for the last five years, and it seems to me that it's the third party that has supported the Liberal government on many of their energy policies that are damaging the province of Ontario. Without fail, we have a member of the third party get up every day and try, to varying degrees of sick humour, to pretend like hydro prices have been going up since 2003, but anybody who can read a graph knows that energy prices in Ontario didn't start rising in 2003; they started rising on the steep, steep climb that they're on after 2010 as a result of the Green Energy Act, which was supported by the members of the third party, the NDP.

1710

I don't know who they thought that those green energy projects were going to when they say that they don't support the Green Energy Act. Obviously, they were going to private companies—wind and solar contracts that are causing the energy prices to rise at the alarming rate that they're rising here in Ontario.

So they're not fooling us here in the official opposition when they say that it's our fault, of all parties, when we are seeing that the price of electricity has started to rise since 2010.

We have all kinds of evidence, from parliamentary officers, from industry and from independent third-party observers like the C.D. Howe Institute, that show the

rates began to take off in 2010, and they've just continued up that high-speed escalator ever since.

Every time a major piece of legislation has come into this House, we're the opposition party to it. They are the enablers, in the NDP. In fact, I think the reason that the third party focuses on the Hydro One sale so much is because it's the first energy bill on which they had proof that they weren't Liberals.

If I could, I'd like to focus on a particular initiative that's close to my heart, and that was my first bill after arriving here. I remember it like it was yesterday. It was five years ago next month when I introduced the Local Municipality Democracy Act as my private member's bill. The issue I wanted to bring back was local control over energy projects that had been stripped when the Green Energy Act was passed in 2009. This was back in the glory days when we actually had the ability in this House to vote down the government's damaging policies.

In the first week that the Legislature was sitting, there was my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin in the third party who brought forward the bill to take the HST off hydro bills. We here in the official opposition supported that at the time.

We thought that the next week, when we brought back something that the NDP supported during the election campaign in 2011, like restoring municipal decision-making, they would join us and they would put it in the face of the government that they were taking away authority from local municipalities, but they didn't have the stomach for it. They couldn't do it and, again, they supported this government. They didn't support giving local municipalities back their decision-making.

Ontario consumers have never been more at the whim of the Liberal pals in the energy sector than they are right now. To put the blame for that anywhere but on this government is simply wrong, and the NDP have allowed it to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait plaisir d'ajouter quelques mots à ce débat un peu houleux que nous avons cet après-midi.

Dans un premier temps, c'est clair que du côté des néo-démocrates, on appuie l'énergie verte. Ce n'est pas l'énergie verte en tant que telle, ce ne sont pas les panneaux solaires et ce ne sont pas les éoliennes qui sont le problème; c'est la façon dont le gouvernement libéral a mis de l'avant ces contrats auxquels les gens dans les organismes à but non lucratif, ou même notre propre OPG, n'avaient pas droit. Seulement les compagnies privées y avaient droit, ce qui a fait qu'on a continué ce que les conservateurs avaient mis en place.

Il faut se remettre—un petit peu d'histoire, ça fait toujours du bien, hein?—au début des années 1900. Pendant à peu près 100 ans, l'électricité en Ontario était vendue au coût. On se souvient tous d'Adam Beck, qui avait dit que l'électricité devrait être un bien public. Pendant 100 ans, on a fait ça. Il y a eu des guerres; il y a eu une grosse dépression après la Deuxième Guerre

mondiale. On a construit des hôpitaux; on a construit des routes; on a construit des universités, des écoles et tout ça. Et pendant tout ce temps-là, on a vendu l'électricité aux Ontariens et Ontariennes au coût que ça nous coûtait pour faire non seulement la génération, mais la distribution et le transport de l'électricité. On a fait tout ça, et l'électricité en Ontario était abordable à environ trois ou quatre sous du kilowattheure.

Arrive le gouvernement de Mike Harris, qui a décidé qu'il y avait de l'argent à faire du côté de l'électricité et qu'il y avait de l'argent à faire pour ses amis du côté des compagnies privées. Donc, on a décidé, plutôt que de regarder le système électrique dans son ensemble, que la génération de l'électricité pouvait être privatisée, la distribution de l'électricité pouvait être privatisée, et avec la privatisation est arrivé le coût pour les profits. On a vu que nos comptes d'électricité ont commencé à monter en flèche. Lorsqu'est venu le temps de la transmission, on a été capable d'arrêter la privatisation.

Arrive le gouvernement libéral qui, eux, s'opposaient pendant tout ce temps-là à la privatisation de l'électricité. Ils arrivent au pouvoir et ils sont, sinon la même chose, pire que les conservateurs. Eux, ils n'ont jamais fait campagne pour faire la privatisation d'Hydro One, mais ont décidé, aussitôt qu'ils ont été élus, qu'ils étaient pour privatiser Hydro One.

Bien que 83 % des Ontariens et Ontariennes s'y opposent, ça ne les dérange pas. On vit dans une démocratie; ça ne les dérange pas non plus. Ils ont une idée en tête : de s'assurer que leurs amis font beaucoup d'argent avec des compagnies privées qui sont capables d'acheter les « shares » d'Hydro One.

Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire? Ça veut dire que ce qui a été commencé par les conservateurs dans la privatisation, et qui a fait monter les coûts de l'électricité, ne fait que continuer.

Non seulement que la génération de l'électricité ne nous appartient plus; le plant nucléaire n'appartient plus aux Ontariens et Ontariennes. Ça a été acheté par une compagnie privée. Les éoliennes et les panneaux solaires auraient pu nous appartenir, comme on le fait dans les autres pays en Europe de l'Ouest. Non, du tout : ça appartient à des compagnies privées.

Je vois que ma collègue me dit de me taire. Donc, ce qui a été mis de l'avant par les conservateurs, c'est des semi-vérités. Oui, c'est vrai que l'on paye cher pour l'énergie verte, mais ce n'est pas à cause que les néo-démocrates l'ont appuyée; c'est à cause des contrats que les libéraux ont signés.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I just want to start by saying how proud I am of our leader, Patrick Brown, for bringing this motion forward today and for continuing to raise, on a daily basis, the most important issue facing people and businesses across the province.

The high cost of hydro and the loss of municipal planning powers over energy projects are extremely important issues in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. My PC

colleagues have done an excellent job in raising those issues this afternoon. As the critic for economic development and growth, I would like to focus my remarks on the impact that poor Liberal energy policy has on small and medium-sized businesses across Ontario.

While this government continues to hand out corporate grants to large, multinational companies to make up for the high cost of doing business in Ontario, small and medium-sized businesses receive almost no support and often feel this government is their biggest obstacle to their success.

Small manufacturers in this province have representatives from Kentucky, Indiana, Michigan, New York and other states banging down their door, asking them to move their operation south of the border. They would love to have these jobs in their state, and they can offer these companies an energy rate that is a fraction of the cost here in the province of Ontario, along with a lot of other incentives. That's a big deal for companies who pay almost as much for energy as they do for labour. But despite all the economic reasons to make that move, these companies are fighting to stay here, and doing that means fighting this Liberal government.

A large group of them are taking a stand, calling themselves the Coalition of Concerned Manufacturers. They've been crystal clear: They don't worry about their competition anymore. They fear this Liberal government.

These aren't low-wage, precarious jobs we're talking about. Our manufacturers employ engineers, chemists, MBAs, physicists, technicians and many other highly skilled professionals. These are good jobs that poor energy policy is driving out of the province.

Speaker, I can't emphasize enough how dire the situation is for the businesses in this province. Companies that employ 50 or 100 people can be the lifeblood of communities. Many of these companies have already formulated an exit strategy from Ontario. They don't want to leave, but it has gotten to the point that they need to be prepared.

Already, many of these companies that have branches elsewhere have a mandate of no growth in Ontario because of the high and rising cost of hydro, along with the Liberals' cash grab cap-and-trade scheme.

1720

Time is running out for the government to turn things around. I spoke with a representative from one firm yesterday who has done everything he can to keep his CEO from pulling the plug on their southwestern Ontario plant, which employs over a hundred people. He knows what a blow that would be to the small community they're in. He knows how many families would be hurt. But he also knows that the company won't make it another 18 months if nothing changes.

Our party can talk about what we would do differently if we were in government, but we also know we need to fight today for better policy from this Liberal government, because the livelihoods of thousands of people are on the line here, and in many cases, 18 more months of destructive Liberal energy policies will tip the scale.

Speaker, I'm proud that our leader, our energy critic and our party have brought forward this motion to stand up for families and businesses alike. I hope every member of this House will give serious and thoughtful consideration to the solutions we have brought forward today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West and frankly on behalf of all auto workers across this province to speak to this motion. I'm talking about auto workers because the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke stood in his place and pretended that the Conservative Party supports auto and manufacturing jobs.

Not a single person in my riding or any riding in Ontario that has auto workers believes for a minute that the Conservative Party supports auto jobs. They stood up and said, "Let auto die. Let the auto industry die." For the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to stand in his place and talk about how the Liberal government is chasing auto jobs out of this country and how now the Conservatives have a problem with that—Speaker, I would use a word, but it would be very unparliamentary. We'll call it horse hockey. How about that? Not a single person in the auto industry believes the Conservatives are suddenly champions of the auto industry.

The same member stood up and talked about how the Liberal talking points have changed. The Liberal talking points haven't changed. They still stand here and defend the sell-off of our public hydro system. They still stand in their place and talk about how the sell-off is not affecting the price of hydro in this province. Again, there is not a single person in this province who believes that privatizing our public hydro asset is not affecting the bill they receive every single month. The people in my riding know; they've sent me hundreds of hydro bills to share with the Premier and the Minister of Energy, which I have, to show the skyrocketing cost of hydro because of their decision to sell off Hydro One—which was the same decision that the Conservative Party started when they were in government.

I know the member from Niagara Falls wants to have his say, and I'm sure that he will wrap it up nicely for our side. Blaming green energy, which is what the Liberals and the Conservatives are both doing, is not doing anyone a favour. For the Conservatives to stand up and blame the NDP, the only party that has consistently opposed the sell-off of public hydro, is, frankly, ridiculous.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's ludicrous.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Ludicrous.

The Liberal Party are the ones who signed the green energy contracts. We certainly support clean, renewable energy. It doesn't mean we support their decision to sign exorbitant contracts.

The leader of the Conservatives stood in his place and said that the Liberals are taking Ontario down the wrong path. Speaker, I would say that the Conservative Party is trying to do exactly the same thing with their flip-flop on the sell-off of our public hydro asset.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, where do I begin? Let's just get on the record with history.

For my friends opposite, what drove hydro costs? I sat there as the mayor of Winnipeg, consolidating our hydro utility with the province, reading reports on the insanity of the Harris government here. What were they doing? Because we couldn't figure it out on the other side of the border—when Premier Doer and I were putting together our hydro consolidation. They were investing in Ontario one quarter per capita the amount of money in transportation and any energy infrastructure. Under the Harris government, there were years when there was barely \$1 billion spent on roads and energy. Forty years of massive disinvestment, and the transmission lines required 80% replacement—\$8 billion were left that we had to invest in transmission to keep the system from doing that.

The second big cause was that the nuclear plants in the late 1990s were determined by the regulator to be at unacceptable operating levels and not operating safely. So what's the other big cost? Tens of billions of dollars having to be invested, since we got elected, in nuclear infrastructure because they just left their kids the bills.

And the third big cost was the stranded assets that the member from Windsor–Tecumseh pointed out: \$28 billion when you devalue, through privatization, your own asset and create a real debt out of that. That is 90% of the problem. It was not green energy; the NDP is quite correct in that assumption.

And then the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex: Well, I have some news for you. Yes, it's cheaper in Michigan and Ohio. Why? Because they're running on coal. We all know that's the hidden agenda. They love cheap coal over there. It's interesting today, isn't it? What do they point to as the great success story on energy rates that everyone is going to run to? All of the industries are running to Ohio and Michigan because they have coal-fired plants. Literally, your economic critic said, "That's the way to go. Ontario should be just like Indiana and Ohio and Michigan."

Well, I've got some news for you: What is happening with Governor Snyder, the good Republican governor of Michigan? He's closing nine coal plants. So strap your seats on in the official opposition and watch what happens now. Watch what happens now as they try to close their coal plants. What's the other thing that's happening? What's happening is the cost now is that they don't have any infrastructure in place in the US to replace it. When Hillary Clinton is elected president, the power plan is back on, and they've got to close nine coal plants. You're going to be very glad that you live on this side of the border, because border carbon adjustments are going to come. All of the New England states, including Pennsylvania, have a cap-and-trade system. They're not going to sit around while Ohio and Michigan—and by the way, those are all right-to-work states. They have completely destroyed their labour; they are low-wage environments. You think that's the model?

And the other thing: For a party that considers itself economically and fiscally competent, can you explain to me why California, Quebec and Ontario are leading in direct foreign investment? Why is Nova corporation making unprecedented investments in Sarnia while Goldcorp has been in meetings with ministers about massive reinvestments in their mine? Why is Glencore now doing that? Why do they have proposals under our climate change legislation that could literally cut their energy costs in half in a mine because of implementing new ventilation electric vehicles? Can I tell you that all nine major emitting industries, our largest industries, are supporting cap-and-trade and are all lined up outside of Minister Thibeault's, Minister Gravelle's and my office, working on massive investments to revitalize our infrastructure?

Number one in direct foreign investment—where's Ohio in direct foreign investment, this economic miracle, this Republican Tea Party hack hole? Where are they? They're back of the bus: low wages, low economies, anemic economic performance, and they're not even in the top 20 in direct foreign investment.

These guys are really quite something to watch over there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: My goodness. If anyone was watching TV and watched the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, you would say, "Where am I? Am I really in the province of Ontario?" Then they opened their hydro bill and said, "Oh, yes, we are," because it's in crisis. Anything you just said—the average person, the businesses are like, "What are you talking about?" Have you not seen the numbers? Have you not seen the losses of jobs, over 300,000 manufacturing jobs? I'm going to speak about a few businesses in my riding later on that left, and I'll tell you why they left.

1730

This government is blind to the crisis that's going on in the province. Until Scarborough–Rouge River occurred, they never took what we said about the stories from our ridings seriously. That's a shame, because since 2010 at least, we've been screaming because we've heard the stories from our ridings. I just did a petition to the government and it calls on the government to reduce skyrocketing energy prices. I cannot keep up with the papers—I put it in the newspaper—that came into my office, all signed. People are so angry, and they have a right to be angry. There's an out-of-control hydro crisis in the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: No, no, no.

Interjection: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ms. Laurie Scott: We can have these discussions and you can go back—

Interjections.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Why don't you read what the Auditor General said, and gave you all the remarks of—

Mr. Todd Smith: A failing grade.

Ms. Laurie Scott: A failing grade is the headline. There's no question, there's a failing grade on so many points, Speaker, that I wouldn't have time to go through them all.

There was \$9.2 billion more than we should have spent on renewables alone. That puts people in peril. Look at the hospitals all across Ontario, not just in my riding but the hospitals all across Ontario. The ministry just gave some a 1% increase, but the hydro bill escalation over the last few years has been over 30%. It doesn't match.

Mr. John Yakabuski: In the last year.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Just in the last year. Look, the amount of hydro rates for hospitals cuts the amount of care they get. They can't perform the surgeries they want to because they have this gigantic hydro bill to pay. They're already under a lot of pressure from collective bargaining increases and inflationary health care costs, and the government gave a 1% increase. It doesn't cover even the increase in the last few years in the hydro bill.

I had a constituent, John—he had Leda Furniture. He was recently forced to close because of the economic landscape and challenges to manufacturing in Ontario. But what was the main cause of his once-proud Ontario business closure? I'll quote him. He said, "The principal culprit—hydro rates and a sense of disinterest from Queen's Park on anything in central or northern Ontario."

The damage that this government is doing to the economic growth of the province is devastating our small businesses. But it's not just them. You hear it from non-government organizations. You hear from churches, from curling clubs, about the impact of these increased costs in hydro. They can hardly keep their doors open, if they can, and they can't provide the services they used to to the communities.

John Teljeur from the riding—I want to thank him for tabling a petition with me. The organization that he helps is the Heat Bank Haliburton County, which "struggles to help people who are in desperate need just to keep the heat on in their homes."

The energy poverty that people are facing across the province has led to tragic situations. Just last week, in myKawartha.com, you had the death of Kenny Taylor of the Curve Lake First Nation, who was "badly burned and later died in hospital of his injuries after an explosion inside a shed that he used to store a generator." He'd had to use the generator since July. It had been running around the clock because his hydro was disconnected. People can't afford to pay their hydro bills, and they're forced into these situations.

Another constituent said, "The cost of surviving—forget trying to live well—is flying out of control in Ontario, and something must be done." What's worse is that we see this government continuing its policy experiments that do nothing to deal with the problem they created. What do we hear from the Wynne government? They're telling people, just like we've heard from the ministers and speakers on the Liberal side, "Everything is fine."

The energy minister says he's proud of the government's record on energy. He has nothing to be proud of. He keeps repeating the same line, the talking points over and over. He says the 8% reduction is going to be wonderful for the people of Ontario. Well, a lot of people's hydro bills have gone up 400%, so thank you for the little 8%. Then he says, "Oh, don't forget the OESP." It takes six to eight weeks to get maybe a \$45 credit on your hydro bill, but then it takes one to two months for it to appear—and that's if you qualify.

I have a constituent who applied right away. He's still waiting for the credit to be processed. He's then moving in December, and he's been told that the credit cannot be transferred to his new account and he must re-apply again. This is the silly bureaucratic nonsense that they say is going to bring relief to the people of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, these are real people. They're in real trouble. The government should stop being so condescending to them and finally treat the issue of energy poverty with the seriousness it deserves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm really pleased to have this opportunity to add my voice to this debate today, because when we're talking about affordability and the future of Ontarians, there's nothing more important than recognizing the credible ideas that were brought forth in this motion. I think that it's absolutely another misstep on behalf of the Liberal government as well as the third party to be voting against it.

We heard a lot of bluster earlier, but the realities are that, from the moment I stepped in the House and had the honour of standing here, we have fought hard against the ramifications that have been realized from one end of the province to the other, and those ramifications are associated with the Green Energy Act. And every time that I or my colleagues brought forward thoughtful motions and private members' bills, not only did the third party vote against them, but the Liberal government did as well, turning an absolute deaf ear and blind eye to the real issues. We have said from the onset that this was going to be an economic crisis.

One thing this Liberal government has been successful in doing is that we have found a common thread that binds rural Ontario together with urban Ontario. It doesn't matter whether you're in Huron-Bruce or downtown Toronto, everybody is experiencing higher electricity bills, and it really needs to be addressed.

My colleagues have done a great job of outlining how electricity rates have gone through the roof. But I want to share with everyone in the House, in my final minutes here, some empathetic feelings and sincere thoughts that go out to pillars of our communities. I'm talking about the Canadian Legion in Kincardine. The Royal Canadian Legion in Kincardine is up against it very tough. They have spent good money trying to make their historic building affordable so that they can keep it open. But unfortunately, their building is heated with electricity. It is just to the point of having to make a choice: What are

they going to do? Specifically, it's branch 183. It's a 130-year-old heritage building right in the heart of Kincardine.

Let's realize this: Legions in every riding in Ontario are meeting places where people host their weddings and where people can socialize. But most importantly, everyone in this room needs to recognize that Royal Canadian Legions are where our veterans are honoured. As I said, in Kincardine, their bill is upwards of \$4,300 per month, and half of that is comprised of global adjustment and delivery charges. They're not going away, Speaker.

This is not pocket change. It's a massive increase that makes it next to impossible to operate the Legion in Kincardine. They're trying to fundraise for a \$40,000 propane furnace that they hope could be rejigged for natural gas. But unfortunately, that hope is going to be dashed as well, if this Liberal government gets their way and bans natural gas.

With regard to the Royal Canadian Legions, I just want to remind everybody that Remembrance Day is approaching. The Royal Canadian Legion in Kincardine and, I'm sure, other Legions across the province should be planning on how to best honour the sacrifices of our veterans and not fretting over how to pay their hydro bills.

We heard about curling clubs. There's one in Walkerton that I want to draw attention to. Last December, they were billed \$2,581 for electricity, \$1,443.36 for delivery, \$161 for the debt retirement charge, and \$571.86 in HST. Of their \$5,000 bill, only half went to the cost of electricity. The rest went to fees, taxes and charges. This year, it's going to go higher.

1740

The list could go on and on. Just this past weekend, I was at a fundraising event for Community Living. They are having a tough time managing their electricity bills in group homes.

Speaker, the gist of all of this is that the Liberal government and their poor decisions, their poor policy, has caused life in Ontario to become very, very difficult and unaffordable. We need to ensure that we take proper steps forward, because the pressure of the Liberals' poor policy is causing the pillars of our community to crumble.

Honestly, what we need to see—and by introducing this motion, with the hopes that the government and the third party would stand with us—is that they would take responsibility for past mistakes and focus on making life affordable for Ontarians throughout this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? The member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to rise and speak to this motion today. As you know, I've taken every chance I've been offered to speak on the hydro crisis in this province created by this Liberal government.

The word is "crisis"—a crisis in Ontario for hydro. The people in my riding tell me everywhere I go that these bills are a crisis for them. That is their number one

issue. Activists in Niagara continue to be vocal on this issue, and I'm proud to stand with them.

Seniors have to choose between food and medicine to pay their hydro bill. Small business and big businesses are losing their business, and we're losing jobs.

But I'm happy to speak on the motion, because it's being put forward by Conservatives who are clearly trying to hide their own role in the crisis and the fact that they've been on every side of this issue, depending on whose votes they're trying to get.

Part of this motion talks about stopping the sale of our publicly owned hydro assets, yet in 2012, that very same party put out a series of white papers that called for that exact sale. Most of the members sitting here today supported that policy. The Conservative policy paper basically said, "Sell hydro to private interests, and who cares what it ends up costing taxpayers?" Suddenly—and this is important—once they see how unpopular it is, they become opposed to the sale of Hydro One, while the NDP, for the last year, has gone to community after community after community in the province of Ontario talking about this crisis.

I listened to their leader talk a few hours ago. He brought up Quebec and Manitoba having lower rates. He's right about that. But does anybody know why? Because it's publicly funded and publicly owned. That's why it's lower.

I wish I could say that this was the first time I've seen the Conservatives do this, but in the last few years, they've been flip-flopping on just about everything. You don't need to look any further than what they did in the recent by-election. The Conservative leader said that he was opposed to the sale of Hydro One. Are we sure he actually opposed it, or was it just something his chief of staff or the president of his party was saying? Are you sure they actually consulted with the Conservative leader this time, or is it just another policy of the party president that is not shared with the party leader? Because if we look at that by-election, it's clear that the party president holds views and signs off on letters that supposedly the party leader doesn't share.

Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives now claim they are opposed to the privatization of our hydro system. If they ever form government, I can only wonder how long it would take them to reverse that position.

In my riding, the Conservative candidate said no to GO for Niagara. Don't forget, that was the party that opposed it. They opposed what is going to be a major economic boost to Niagara, and then, after all the work we did to make it a reality, against their best efforts, they now claim that they won't cancel the project. At least, they say that now.

Or maybe—and this is important, because they're here. My colleague from Windsor West raised this. Maybe look at the auto industry in Niagara. Every time I bring this up, I hear their members screaming that they support the auto industry. Well, I'm going to say this again, because I was at the table in 2009. I listened to them say, "Let the auto industry die," time and time

again. He's right here. He's from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I actually got his minutes where he said they don't pick winners and losers, but I'll tell you who the losers would have been in that particular case: It would have been the auto sector dying. It would have meant no auto jobs, no parts jobs, no steel jobs in the province of Ontario. They would have been gone.

But do you know what tore at my heart the most when I was at that table? I was thinking about the retirees who, the very next day, if they would have let the auto industry die, would have lost every single one of their benefits—every benefit, not only for themselves, but for their spouse. And then their pensions would have gone down from 100% to 34%.

We have a party that's saying they now stick up for the auto sector, or they care about manufacturing. They certainly didn't care about it when I was there in 2009. I wish they would just stop talking about it, because every time they talk about it, it gets me going. They're willing to make up their own history once they realize how often they're on the wrong side of issues. Mr. Speaker, you can see how well we can trust these commitments where I come from.

It's nice to see the Conservative Party is apparently willing to join us and speak out against high hydro rates and the privatization of hydro now. Of course, as I mentioned, they supported it publicly in the past and created this situation in the first place, but it's good to see them coming on board with us and actually standing up for the people of the province of Ontario.

Frankly, it's scary to see what the Conservative Party is doing here to try to win votes. This is important to listen to. I want my colleagues on this side to listen to this. They're trying to convince the province that any support for environmental legislation is going to cause their hydro bills to rise. They're content with using people's livelihoods and the bills they can't afford to turn them against the environment, instead of being honest with them about why their bills are so high. This is important to me. I don't have a lot of time, but this is important to me. It seems they're happy to sell out our children's and our grandchildren's future just so they can pretend like they're being active on the hydro file.

I'm proud to say I have three daughters. I'm fortunate that I have five healthy grandkids. I want to make sure when I leave this place that they're in a better place than where I was, that we have clean air and clean water. This motion is an attempt to fight against those who have fought for the health of our environment, for the future of our province and our planet. It's written to have the NDP vote against it, because they know we're smart enough to know how wrong this motion is, and they're hoping they can spin it. Imagine spinning it about our kids and our grandkids.

The issue is not with environmental protection; it's with the poor contracts that were signed by the Liberal government and with the privatization schemes started by the Conservatives. Hydro rates were steady at 4.5 cents per kilowatt hour for years. That was until the PC

government under Mike Harris began to privatize it. What happened when they began to privatize our assets? The price per kilowatt hour doubled. The Liberals came in and they continued it. It's now up to 30 cents.

There's a clear link that anyone can look back and see. Once they began to privatize rates, they began to rise. It's right in the record, and no poorly worded motion designed to scare people will change that fact.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just about out of time. Thank you very much for allowing me to say a few words on this poorly worded and designed motion.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Mr. Brown has moved opposition day motion number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Members, please take your seats.

Mr. Brown has moved opposition day motion number 3. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Brown, Patrick
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon
Clark, Steve
Coe, Lorne
Fedeli, Victor

Harris, Michael
Jones, Sylvia
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia

Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Anderson, Granville
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Baker, Yvan
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne
Gélinas, France

Gravelle, Michael
Gretzky, Lisa
Hatfield, Percy
Hoggarth, Ann
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kiwala, Sophie
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mantha, Michael
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted
Milczyn, Peter Z.

Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thibeault, Glenn
Vanthof, John
Vernile, Daiane
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 24; the nays are 58.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Leeds–Grenville has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given October 20, 2016, by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Leeds–Grenville now has up to five minutes to debate the matter. I recognize the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm pleased to speak further to my concerns with changes under way at the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The buzzword that was being used by Trillium's leadership is "regionalization." Well, I'm pleased to announce this afternoon we learned the regionalization scheme that I've been calling to have scrapped since the spring is off the table. I want to thank my colleagues in the Ontario PC caucus who supported me in speaking out against it. The decision to maintain the number of catchment areas at 16, rather than reducing them to five, is great news.

I want to stress that today's announcement from Trillium comes with a number of other changes. I'm anxious to have a briefing from the ministry and the Ontario Trillium Foundation to discuss the impact that they will have moving forward.

I can tell you that I have serious concerns with the plan to move to a single intake per year for seed, grow and capital grant streams. Already, my office has heard from local groups who are against a single intake per year for capital grants. Remember, the capital grants program stream was put on hold this year by the government so that Trillium could deliver the Ontario150 program. Today's announcement from OTF indicates that the 2017 intake will be October 25. That's a full year from today—a very long time to wait. It means that nearly two years will have passed before those small volunteer organizations that rely on capital funding to maintain their facilities and deliver programs will have access to a grant. As I said, I feel that's too long to wait.

On this issue, I want to emphasize something I've brought up whenever I have raised my concern about regionalization: You can't make these significant

changes to Trillium without first consulting community groups and municipalities across the province. They need to be part of the discussion first, not brought in after the fact.

Those are my initial comments, Speaker, on the announcement that I've heard today. I'll have more to say after I learn the specific details of the program, moving forward.

In my time remaining, I do want to touch on one of the issues I raised in my question last week, and that's the tremendous number of vacancies on OTF's grant review teams. Under its memorandum of understanding with the ministry, OTF is required to have a minimum of 18 and up to 24 members on each of its 16 grant review committees. However, I've discovered that just one of the 16 catchment areas—Toronto—has the minimum 18 volunteers, as is required in the MOU. The remainder's average is 9.4.

I emphasize that these volunteers are the heart and soul of the Trillium program—they who truly understand the communities. The irreplaceable local knowledge they bring to the table ensures that granting decisions have the most local impact. The minister should be outraged that Trillium is flouting the MOU, and I hope she will join me in demanding that those vacancies get filled immediately.

Again, I want to thank Trillium, and I want to thank the minister for listening on regionalization. We've still got some work to do, but I'm pleased that our voices were heard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport has up to five minutes to reply.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I'm delighted to do so, Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in response to the member opposite's questions about the Ontario Trillium Foundation because, along with the members of Ontario's not-for-profit sector, I greatly value the important work that Trillium does across our province. On this side of the House we're committed to supporting the Trillium Foundation and its work.

I would be happy to discuss this ongoing commitment that we have demonstrated with the member opposite. Frankly, I'm disappointed that he has chosen to go about securing a response to his thesis in this manner because of the implicit risk his comments carry in terms of propagating misinformation and the ensuing impacts that can have, given the role that Trillium plays as a funder in the sector. The other risk inherent in this kind of approach is one of politicization. The work that Trillium does can and should be independent of political discourse. As such, we should always steer clear of any temptation to leverage their work politically.

A number of concerns that the member aired publicly could have been addressed in a conversation, but he never approached me or my staff. Had he done so, I would have told him that his thesis was built on faulty information and speculation. With his question last week, the member opposite demonstrated a disappointing lack of confidence in and, frankly, understanding of the

Ontario Trillium Foundation's grant review teams and their board of directors.

As minister, I greatly value the work of our GRTs; in fact, their local lens is critical to the work that Trillium does. As minister, I welcome advice, input and, yes, questions about Trillium. In this context, I value this opportunity to clarify some recent misinformation that, regrettably, the member opposite gives voice to with his question.

Last year, the Ontario Trillium Foundation launched a series of reforms to its granting process called ReDesign 2015. Since then, the Ontario Trillium Foundation has been making continuous improvements to their programs and service delivery. Speaker, we are right there along with them. I understand that the Trillium Foundation has looked at various options to further improve their granting process to ensure resources are being allocated in a way that enables applicants to put forth their best possible application and in a manner that enhances service to the folks that they work with to provide grantees across our province. In fact, as the member noted earlier this afternoon, the Trillium Foundation announced plans to do exactly this by creating one application window for each of its granting streams.

What this plan does not do—and this is very important—is provide for a reduction in the number of catchment areas. So I'm pleased to clarify that, contrary to the member opposite's claims, the Ontario Trillium Foundation's current catchment structure is not changing. The member opposite's assertions about the Ontario Trillium Foundation were thus unfounded and without merit.

I understand that the board considered a number of options to improve customer service. After consulting with stakeholders across the province, the Trillium Foundation is moving forward with a new plan to improve service delivery, introducing a single application deadline for each of the three streams in funding. This will eliminate the confusion that can sometimes arise, streamline applications and provide clearer, better access and support for all.

I should know, Speaker. Prior to being elected, I had the privilege of running a not-for-profit organization that was Trillium-funded. As such, I know the vital role that Trillium plays. But I'm also quite familiar with the challenges organizations can have in navigating the very difficult and, at times, somewhat complicated Trillium process. Thankfully, Trillium staff are there to help, and that was reinforced today.

These changes also bring the OTF in line with best practices adopted by many other granting organizations, including the Ontario Media Development Corp. and the Ontario Arts Council.

The changes that Trillium has announced will provide a number of benefits to potential applicants, including access to enhanced support and an even more focused and streamlined process. I have every confidence that the changes being introduced will improve customer service for applicants and build their capacity.

In addition, grant review teams will be able to better assist applicants, ultimately supporting stronger applications that benefit Ontarians in every corner of our province.

I would also like to address comments that the member opposite made about the public appointments process for our grant review teams. We understand the important work that these teams are tasked with. As I think the member opposite is aware, the grant review teams are comprised of volunteers who dedicate their time to making important decisions that impact all Ontarians.

Our government works with the Ontario Trillium Foundation regularly to seek out new applicants and fill openings as efficiently as possible. I'm happy to report that staff are working to ensure that vacancies are filled expeditiously and accountably. We'll continue working with the Public Appointments Secretariat and the Ontario Trillium Foundation to minimize wait times for applicants. We are making great progress in that regard, and as such, we are moving expeditiously to fill them.

In closing, I want to underscore the fact that we must be cautious when we're talking about Trillium, as it's an organization that is a jewel in our Canadian framework and in the not-for-profit sector. They do tremendous work. I know that the member opposite shares my view of the importance of being cautious when it comes to working with Trillium and talking about Trillium and our grant review teams. I know he will join me in doing everything that we can to support our mutual efforts to strengthen Trillium.

Thank you very much. I appreciate this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank both members.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1813.

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Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
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		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Han Dong
Michael Harris, Sophie Kiwala
Arthur Potts, Todd Smith
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Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Ann Hoggarth
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Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
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Cristina Martins, Peter Z. Milczyn
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**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
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Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch